NEW

ROYAL SCANDALS

THE SORDID STORIES THAT SHAMED MONARCHIES

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ALL ABOUT HISTORY

ROYAL SCANDALS

Secrets, betrayal, and bloodshed have run through the veins of dynasties from antiquity to the present day. Not only have these scandals plagued royal families and jeopardised their monarchies, but they have even brought some of them to their knees. In this brand new book, we reveal the most notorious royal scandals of all time, including the deception that ensnared an innocent Marie Antoinette, the illicit affair between dancer Lola Montez and King Ludwig I that led to the latter's downfall, King Erik XIV's murderous rampage and the demise of King Ludwig II, the eccentric ruler who died in mysterious circumstances.

FUTURE

ROYAL SCANDALS

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Printed in the UK

Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU
www.marketforce.co.uk Tel: 0203 787 9001

All About History Royal Scandals First Edition (AHB4745)
© 2022 Future Publishing Limited

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Contents

AFFAIRS

10 **A Royal State of Affairs**
Discover the illicit relationships and illegal acts that threatened monarchies

16 **The Forbidden Queen**
The beginning and end of the love affair that rocked the very foundations of England itself

22 **Louis XIV's Love Life**
The Sun King had an insatiable appetite for women

26 **Queen Anne's Real Favourite**
The true story behind the rise and fall of Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough

30 **The Queen of Hearts**
The disastrous marriage between Caroline of Brunswick and King George IV scandalised Georgian Britain

34 **The Dancer Who Toppled a King**
Uncover the incredible life of Lola Montez, whose lies caused chaos wherever she went

ALLEGATIONS

40 **Scandals in the Ancient World**
The schemes, murders and affairs that caused shockwaves in antiquity

46 **The Diamond Necklace Affair**
Learn about the elaborate scam that ruined the reputation of Marie Antoinette

50 **The Family Shame**
Edward VIII ascended the throne to great fanfare but felt compelled to give it up within a year, dying a friendless exile with a ruined reputation

56 **The Allegations Against Andrew**
Inside the scandal that has embroiled the Duke of York

60 **The Rise and Fall of Juan Carlos**
The financial scandals that sent the popular king of Spain into ignominious exile

64 **The Sussexes Speak Out**
All you need to know about the Duke and Duchess' explosive interview with Oprah Winfrey

MURDER

68 Isabella

Did the French queen really usurp her husband, King Edward II, to claim England as her own?

74 Who Killed Henry Darnley?

The unsolved murder of Mary, Queen of Scots' husband

78 The Sture Murders

In 1567, King Erik XIV went on a rampage, but what was the story behind this tale of madness and murder?

82 The Scandal That Ended a Dynasty

In the late 1880s, Vienna was rocked by a murder-suicide at the very top of the royal family, but were things quite as they seemed?

88 Murder in the House of Romanov

Shot and stabbed by drunken revolutionaries, the murder of the Russian royal family reverberates today

SECRETS

96 Murder in the Tower

Who happened to the Princes in the Tower?

102 Victoria's Secrets and Scandals

The stories behind the controversies that affected the queen's reign

108 The Mysterious Death of Ludwig II

Accident, murder or suicide - what really happened to the mad king of Bavaria?

116 The Secret Prince

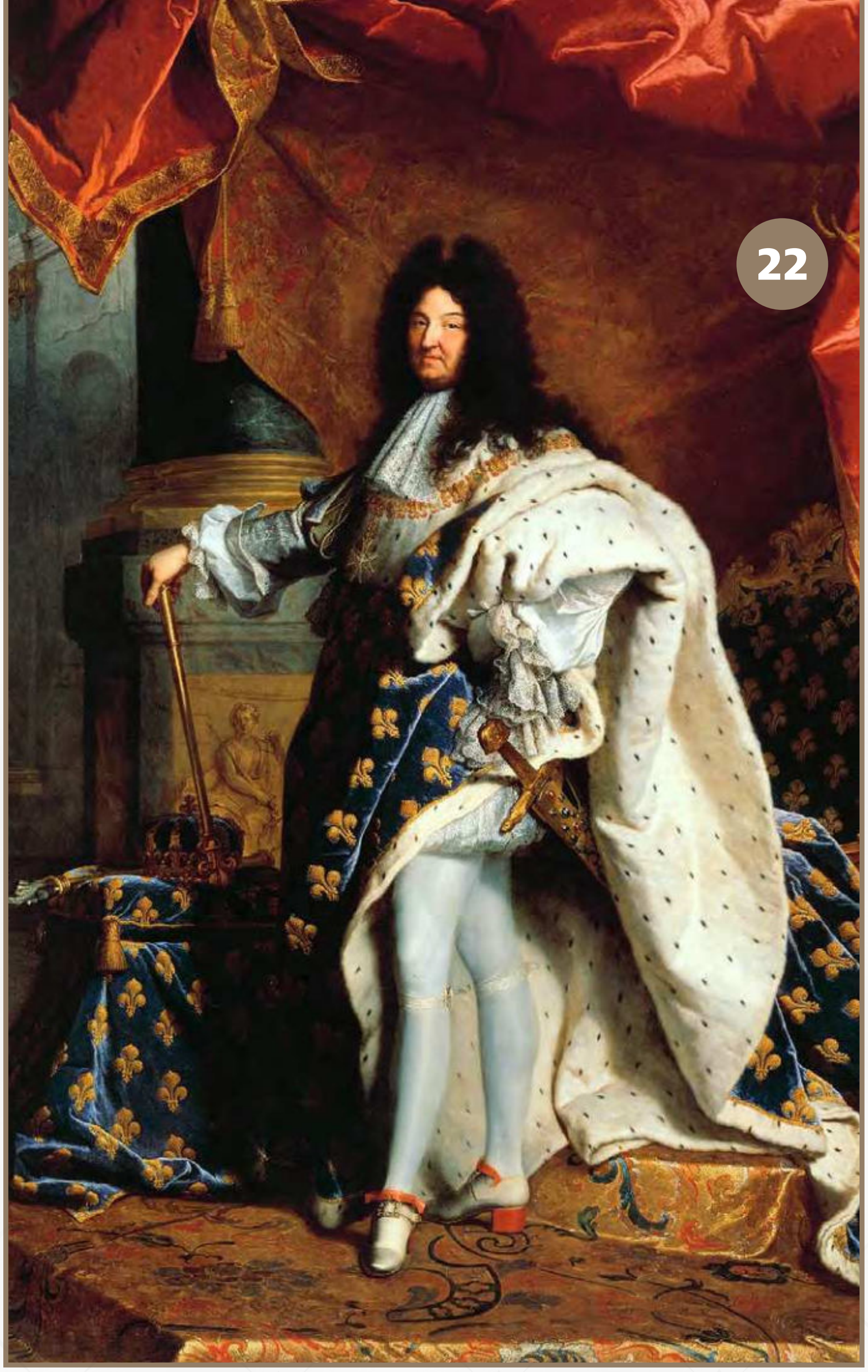
Prince John disappeared from history after his early death, but in life he was a treasured member of the House of Windsor

122 Murderous Mistress

While Edward VIII was known for his many affairs, he didn't expect one of his lovers to become a murderer

46
88
16
40
60

Affairs



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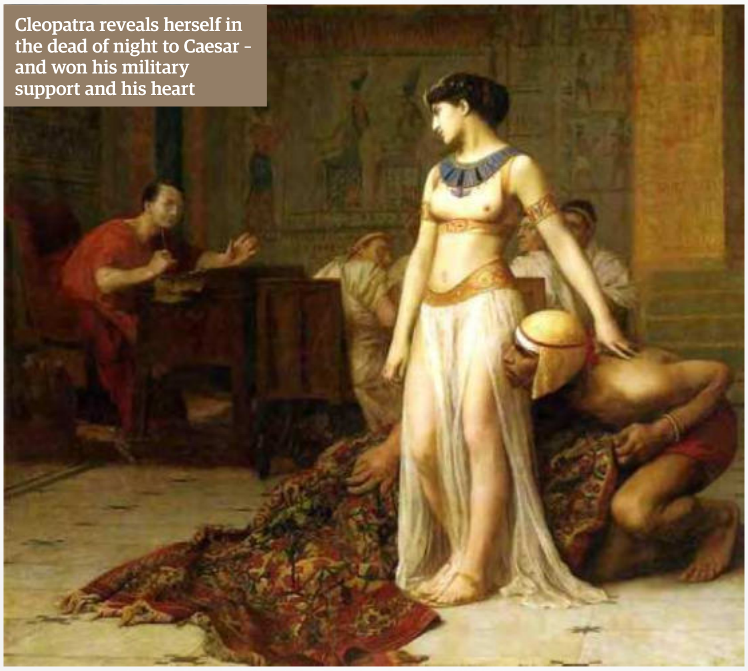
> "Anne knew what became of the mistresses of kings; she had witnessed her own sister tossed aside"

A ROYAL STATE OF AFFAIRS

Illicit relationships, illegitimate children and illegal acts: here are ten royal scandals that threatened the throne

Written by **Alice Barnes-Brown**

Where royalty goes, scandal, duplicity and drama usually follow. Ultimate power, combined with wealth and inevitable human frailty, create the prime conditions for affairs of the heart as well as the state. Kings, queens, princes and princesses often find themselves at the mercy of their own longings - perhaps caught up in a tragic tryst, or even manipulated by their clever objets de desir to act as a puppet monarch for ambitious courtiers. Love, lust and lies are often the making of downfall - whether an ancient pharaoh or a 20th-century absolute monarch, no one is immune from scandal.



Cleopatra reveals herself in the dead of night to Caesar - and won his military support and his heart

CLEOPATRA'S LOVE TRIANGLE

Eroticism and egoism in Egypt

48 TO 31 BCE

Even as a teenager, Cleopatra knew how to wield her wit and beauty. Aged 18, she ascended to the Egyptian throne with her ten-year-old brother, Ptolemy XIII, but wanted it all to herself. Julius Caesar happened to be in Alexandria at the time, and Cleopatra believed getting the Roman leader on side before her brother would be key to her success. The Greek historian Plutarch writes that the young woman "stretched herself at full length inside a bed-sack", and her servant carried her into the palace.

What happened between the two is uncertain, but once Ptolemy XIII found out his sister had gone behind his back, he besieged the palace the power couple were in. In the nick of time, Caesar's reinforcements arrived from Syria, and Cleopatra's power was secured. In 47 BCE, she gave birth to their son Caesarion: but when the (illegitimate) new family arrived in Rome, Cleopatra found herself very unpopular with the Roman people. Things went downhill fast. Caesar named his grandnephew Octavian as his successor, before being assassinated in 44 BCE. A power struggle ensued between Octavian and the powerful general Mark Antony, and Cleopatra returned to Egypt.

Mark Antony went to meet her, as he needed money from wealthy Egypt to fund a campaign in the Parthian Empire. But clever Cleopatra had her own agenda - to expand her empire. Playing on Antony's penchant for Greek culture, she sailed up the Tarsus River dressed as Aphrodite, a vision Antony could not resist.

The two lived relatively happily until 40 BCE, when Antony's influential wife started challenging Octavian back in Rome. Antony returned to plead his innocence of the plot, but couldn't stay away from Cleopatra, and went back to Egypt in 37 BCE. Octavian saw a chance to be rid of his rival for good, and sent ships to fight Antony and Cleopatra's forces at the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE. The pair were defeated, their dreams of dominance in the eastern Mediterranean shattered. The two took their own lives - together in the afterlife, at least, if not on the earthly plane.

THE KING'S MAN

Robert de Vere's disastrous downfall

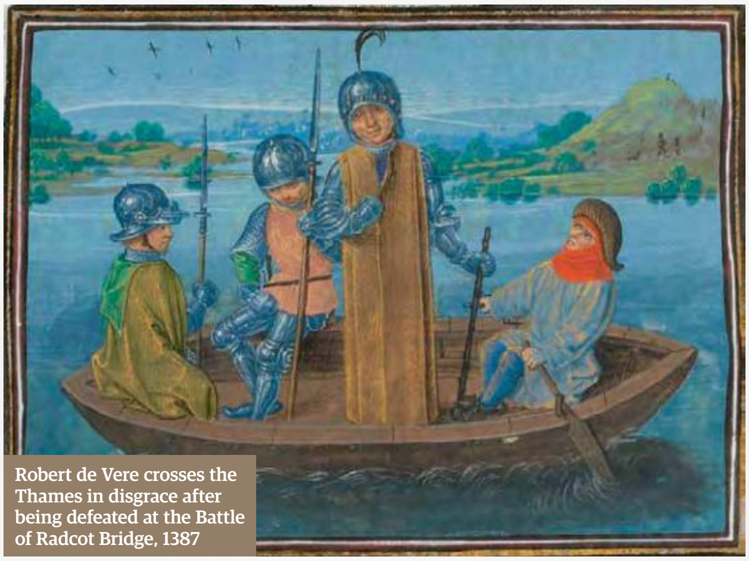
1384 – 1394

Sometimes, becoming the king's right-hand man isn't always a winning strategy, as Robert de Vere found out. The dashing young noble - the earl of Oxford and Lord Great Chamberlain - rapidly became a favourite of Richard II when he ascended the throne in 1376. De Vere convinced the grandiose King Richard to give him more and more lofty titles, such as the marquess of Dublin and duke of Ireland - he was then able to boast that he was the first Englishman to hold those positions.

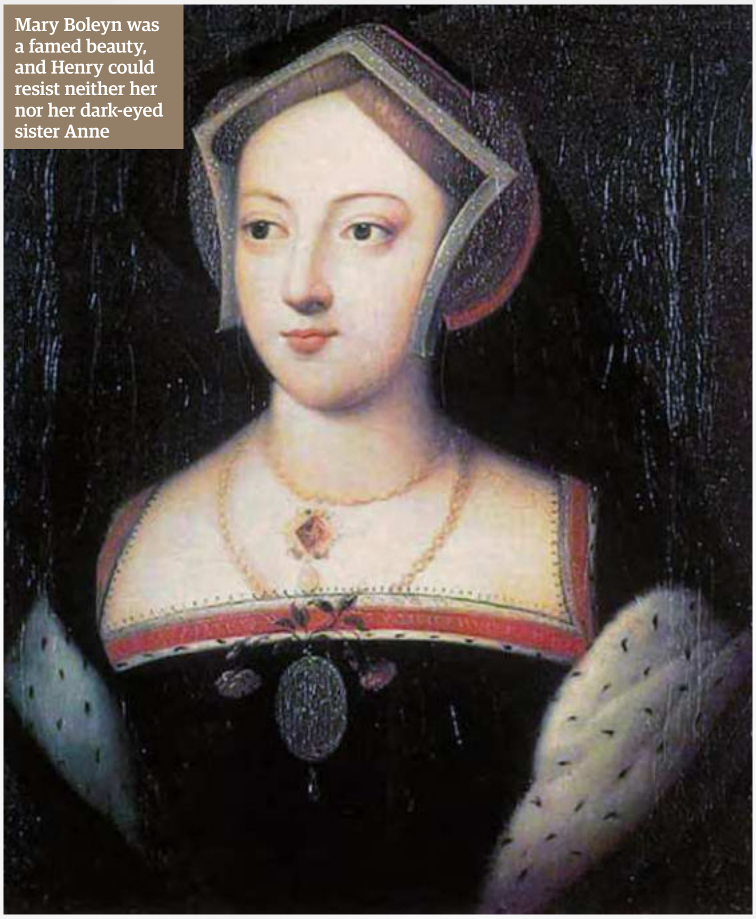
However, de Vere's ascendancy angered the nobility. The title of duke was typically reserved for close relatives of the monarch, which de Vere was not. De Vere continued his rakish path by initiating lascivious affairs, and attempting to divorce his wife Philippa, the king's first cousin. A French chronicler called Froissart wrote: "This duke of Ireland twists the king round his finger and does what he likes in England."

Despite the scandal he attracted, Richard II kept his controversial advisor close. The king's powerful uncle, the duke of Gloucester (and his allies, the Lords Appellant) did not approve. So, the Lords Appellant raised an army against King Richard II in 1387, and defeated de Vere's forces at Radcot Bridge in Oxfordshire. At the moment of surrender, de Vere had disappeared, having fled in disguise to the Continent. He died in 1392, aged 30, from wounds received in a valiant battle - this time, with a wild boar.

> "The title of duke was typically reserved for close relatives of the monarch, which de Vere was not"



Robert de Vere crosses the Thames in disgrace after being defeated at the Battle of Radcot Bridge, 1387



Mary Boleyn was a famed beauty, and Henry could resist neither her nor her dark-eyed sister Anne

SIX WIVES... AND EVEN MORE MISTRESSES

Henry VIII's wandering eye

1510s – 1520s

Henry VIII is arguably best known for marrying six different women, but his love life didn't begin and end with holy matrimony: the Tudor monarch had more than his fair share of mistresses, particularly in his early years, when he is said to have been quite the looker.

Henry's doubts about his marriage to Catherine of Aragon began creeping in in the late 1510s and early 1520s, and he wasted no time in finding extramarital affairs to satisfy his appetite. His first documented mistress was Bessie Blount, a courtier who was but a teenager when she arrived in Catherine of Aragon's household in 1513. As a 15-year-old, she was partnered with Henry in a New Year's masque performance. By 18, she was pregnant with his child. Thomas Wolsey ushered her away from London, and she soon gave birth to Henry's only acknowledged illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy. Bessie was married off in 1522, by which time Henry is believed to have moved on to his next paramour, Mary Boleyn.

The beautiful Boleyns arrived at court in 1522. Both Mary and her sister Anne were held in high esteem by Henry; their father Sir Thomas Boleyn had helped mastermind the Field of the Cloth of Gold meeting, where the French and English thrones tried to outdo each other's grandeur. Although she was already married, Mary was the first woman to catch Henry's eye – little is known about the details of their affair. All Henry admitted, when questioned about his relations with the Boleyn girls and their mother, is that his carnal relations were "never with the mother".

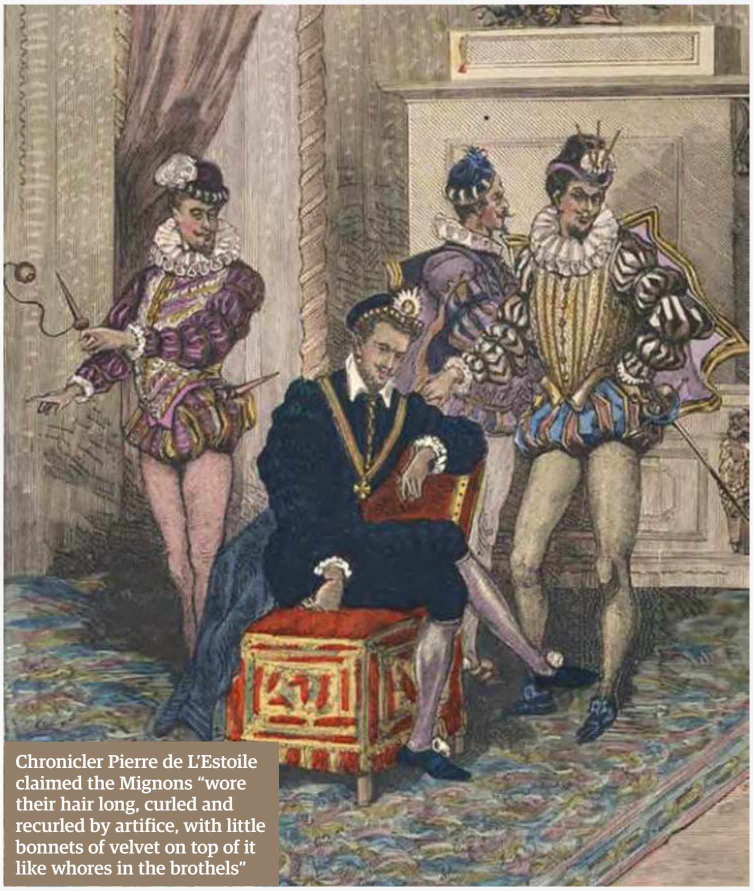
LES MIGNONS

Henry III's dangerous liaisons

1574 – 1689

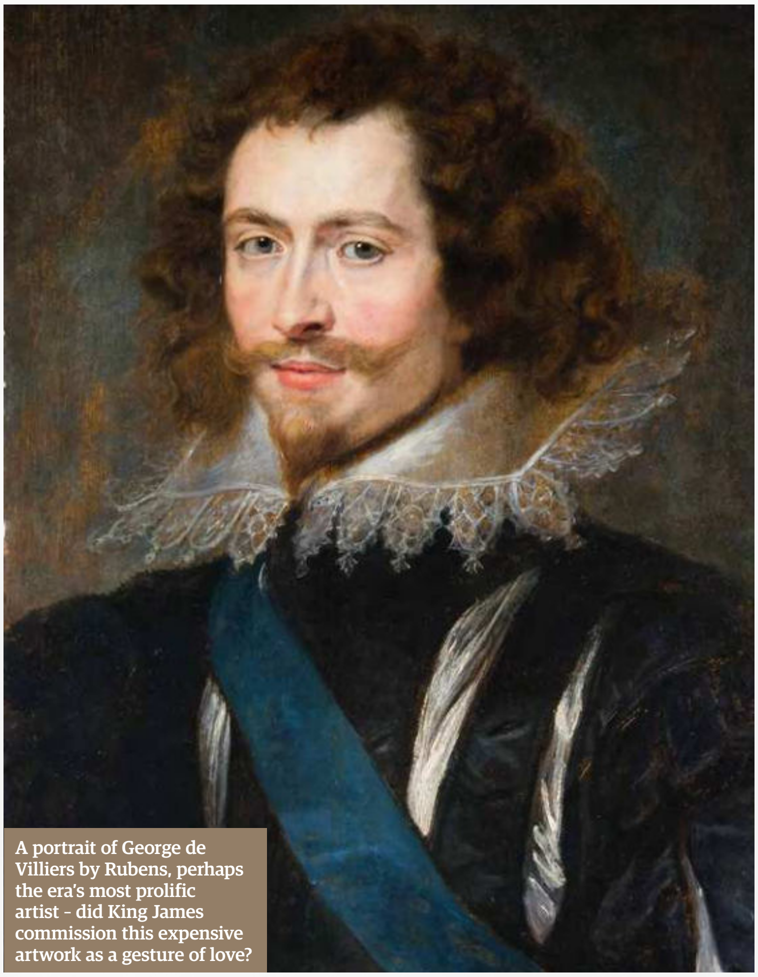
Henry III started his reign as the king of France with much potential, but outrage was to overshadow his reign. During the 16th-century French Wars of Religion, he flouted his disdain for hostile public opinion by lavishing favours on a group of male courtiers, deemed "the Mignons" (which can mean both "darlings" or "minions" in French). The Mignons occasionally went with Henry on his visits to ordinary Parisian districts, but their appearance was rarely welcome. For Parisians, the Mignons represented the worst of King Henry's ostentatious personality.

According to a handful of chroniclers and popular poets, including the vitriolic Pierre de L'Estoile, homosexuality was said to run rife in the court of Henry III. The king was often depicted as engaging in sexual acts with "effeminate" men, who dressed themselves in makeup and ornate clothing. However, in an age when this was common practice for wealthy men, the Mignons have perhaps been unfairly targeted.



Chronicler Pierre de L'Estoile claimed the Mignons "wore their hair long, curled and recurled by artifice, with little bonnets of velvet on top of it like whores in the brothels"

> "For Parisians, the Mignons represented the worst of King Henry's ostentatious personality"



A portrait of George de Villiers by Rubens, perhaps the era's most prolific artist – did King James commission this expensive artwork as a gesture of love?

CARR CRASH

The first king of Great Britain's fancy for young men

1566 – 1625

King James VI & I, the first ruler of "Great Britain", attracted scandal north and south of the Scottish border. Crowned king at just a few months old, the young James had favourites from an early age – including an older relative, the well-travelled Esmé Stewart.

In March 1607, when King James was much older, he witnessed a handsome young man called Robert Carr fall from his horse. James ensured that Carr was nursed back to health, teaching him Latin daily to keep his spirits up. Once recovered, Carr was elevated to high-powered positions, such as the earl of Somerset in 1613. Carr was disliked for his dismissive attitude, so many in James' circle sought to oust him.

The anti-Carr faction hatched a plan. The son of an MP, George Villiers, had just arrived at court, with little money or prospects. Manipulating the king's perceived homosexuality, Villiers was manoeuvered into King James' line of sight, a beautiful new person for James to fall head over heels with. The plan worked: Villiers was made a Knight of the Garter in 1614 and Carr was exiled in the same year.

Villiers was made duke of Buckingham in 1623, and as King James' memory began to fail him, Villiers took over de facto rule of the kingdom. Villiers then began building a close relationship with James' successor, Charles, and some historians have even suggested that Villiers hastened James' death to make way for Charles.

SPARRE-CROSSED LOVERS

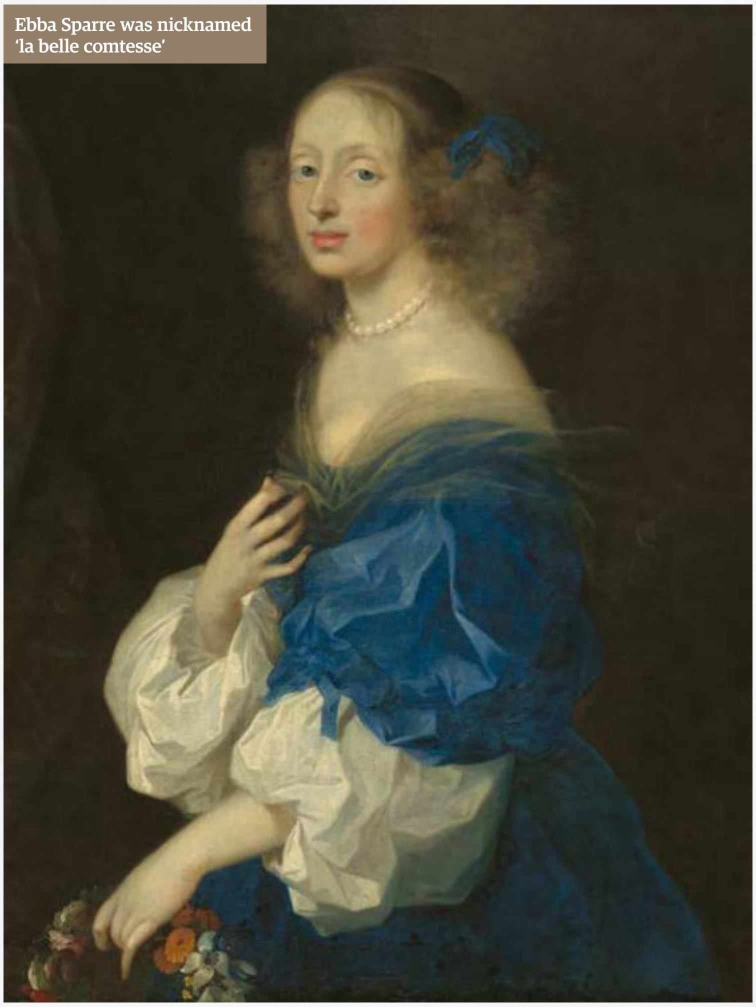
A brilliant queen explores gender boundaries

1632 – 1654

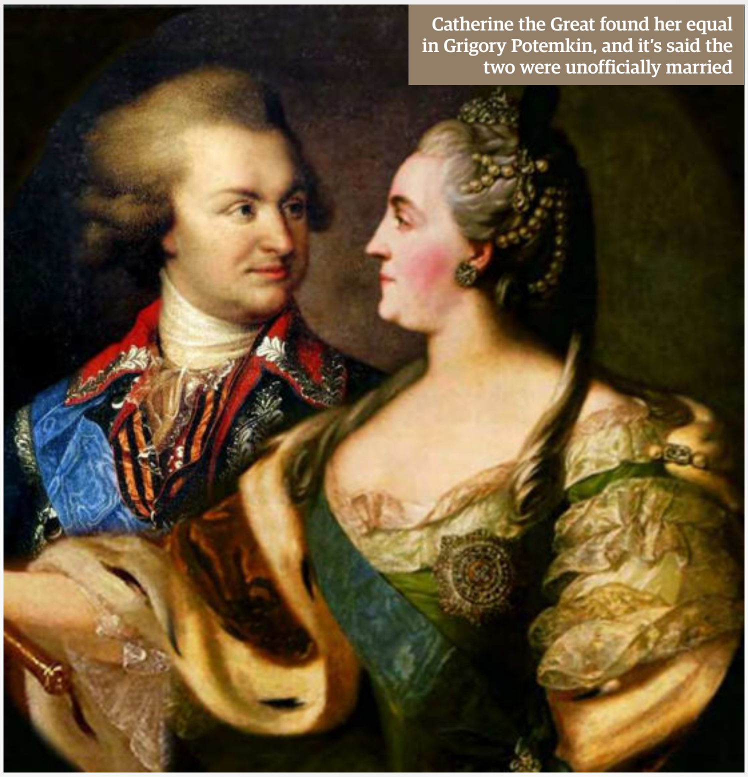
Raised with a boy's education, Queen Christina of Sweden would never be content simply to sit on the throne and look pretty. She set about transforming Stockholm into the "Athens of the North", a centre for education, philosophy and literature. She questioned her Lutheran religion, and preferred masculine dress to constraining feminine attire.

The 15-year-old queen was secretly engaged to marry her aunt's son Charles. However, Christina was averse to marriage. Instead, she found companionship in her lady-in-waiting, Ebba Sparre. The two were the same age and, like Christina, Ebba had suffered the loss of many close family members. Placed under the queen's protection, Ebba became 'Belle' to Christina, and the pair were inseparable. They even shared a bed, although on Sweden's chilly nights, this was not particularly unusual.

Queen Christina ultimately broke off her engagement with Charles, preferring to keep Ebba close at all times. Christina would never marry, but as her dear companion came of age, she ensured that Belle would be well cared for by arranging for her nuptials to the younger brother of another of her favourites. Even after Christina abdicated the throne in 1654, she continued to write loving letters to her faithful Belle, who died in her early thirties in 1662.



Ebba Sparre was nicknamed 'la belle comtesse'



Catherine the Great found her equal in Grigory Potemkin, and it's said the two were unofficially married

CATHERINE THE GREAT AND HER STABLE OF LOVERS

The many lovers of the Russian empress

1774 – 1791

Thanks to an unflattering smear campaign led by her enemies, Catherine the Great's sexual reputation precedes her. Rumours abound that the empress wasn't picky with her lovers, and had an unquenchable thirst for all things boudoir. In reality, only a handful of men - not including her husband, Peter III - made the grade.

Catherine took her first lovers early on in her marriage to Peter, and the paternity of her children was always under question. Grigory Orlov, a Russian lieutenant, was one of her first lovers: it's said that the two actually plotted Peter III's 1762 overthrow while the latter was off holidaying in St Petersburg. The unpopular monarch was arrested, forced to abdicate, and died under suspicious circumstances soon afterwards.

The fateful day of Catherine's coup was to bring her into contact with another future lover, Grigory Potemkin. The distinguished young general made quite the impression, though the pair did not become lovers until 1774, at the peak of Catherine's reign. Potemkin matched Catherine the Great's ambition, intellect and desire to expand Russian territory; the two made powerful alliances and struck savvy deals with European powers. The 1783 annexing of the Crimean Khanate from the Ottoman Empire is said to be Potemkin's work. Perhaps most curiously, he is said to have had "elephantine sexual equipment", according to the prominent historian of Russia, Simon Sebag Montefiore.

Their romantic affair was deep and intense, but lasted only two years. While Catherine went on to take at least a dozen more lovers throughout the rest of her life, none of them matched Potemkin, and she was beside herself with grief when he died in 1791.

THE RIGHT TREATMENT

A Danish queen falls for a dashing doctor

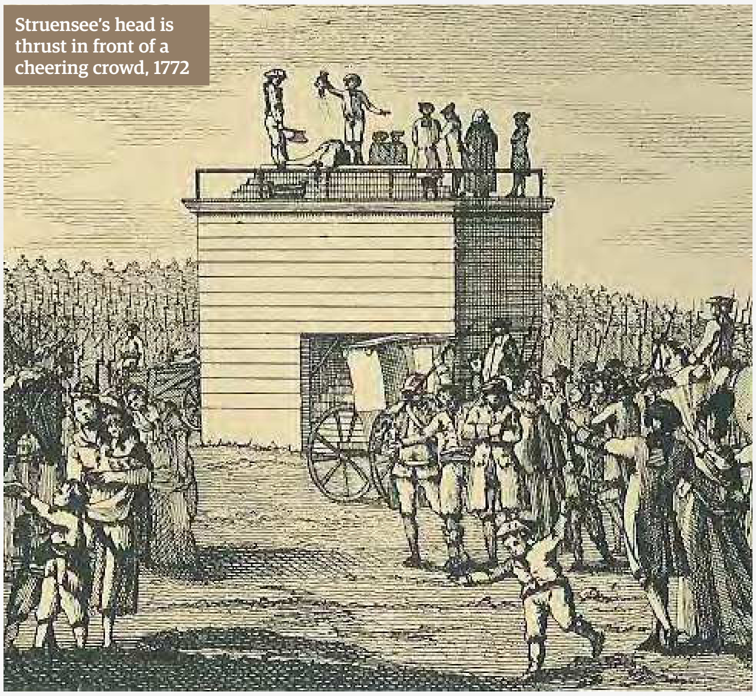
1770 – 1772

When the young British princess, Caroline Mathilde, married King Christian VII of Denmark by proxy in 1766, little did she know that their union was to be an unhappy one. The king was mentally unstable - possibly the product of losing his mother at a young age, and having a brutal and violent teacher.

A young doctor from Germany, Johann Struensee, was called to treat the king in January 1769, as he had expertise in a new type of mental health treatment. He prescribed a kinder method than institutionalisation; fresh air, exercise and cutting back on alcohol, one of the king's vices. As a result, the doctor gained the trust of both the king and the queen. Christian VII made Struensee a confidante, and he had vast influence over the king's policy. It's said that the abolition of torture and capital punishment for theft in Denmark were all Struensee's doing.

Meanwhile, Caroline Mathilde fell for Struensee's charms, and the two embarked on an affair. It's widely believed that Caroline Mathilde's daughter, Louise Augusta, born in 1771, was their love child. However, their affair incensed the King's powerful mother. A garter, given to Caroline Mathilde by Struensee, was the damning evidence used in an accusation against him of lèse-majesté (wronging a royal).

Struensee met his end in 1772 by being decapitated and dismembered. Caroline Mathilde, horrified, formally confessed to their affair and went to live out her days in exile, but died only a few years later at the age of 23.



Struensee's head is thrust in front of a cheering crowd, 1772

> "It's widely believed that Caroline Mathilde's daughter, Louise Augusta, born in 1771, was their love child"

Haijby (left) and his lawyer on their way to court for Haijby's extortion trial

THE HAIJBY AFFAIR

A sex scandal of the highest order

1930s

In 1912, an adorable boy scout, Kurt Johansson, was granted an audience with King Gustaf V of Sweden for his charitable fundraising efforts. But as he grew up, Johansson became a serial conman. He was sentenced to hard labour numerous times, and even changed his name to Kurt Haijby to reinvent himself. In the early 1930s, he decided to open a restaurant with his wife, but owing to his criminal record could not obtain an alcohol license. He gained an audience with King Gustaf for a second time in 1933 to plead his case, and Haijby claims that in that meeting, the 75-year-old king seduced him.

In total, the crown allegedly paid 170,000 Swedish kronor to keep Haijby quiet, including buying him a new life in America, then forcing him to emigrate to Nazi Germany. Once the war was over, Haijby tried to publish his sordid story in 1947, but the Stockholm Police bought all 5,000 copies so it could never be seen by the public. Once Gustaf V had died, Haijby asked for an investigation into the way he had been treated by the Swedish authorities, but it backfired and he ended up being tried for extortion and sentenced to even more hard labour in 1952. Haijby was ruined, and committed suicide after serving out his sentence.

PRINCESS MARGARET'S MISMATCH

A divorced war hero falls out of love with the House of Windsor

1952 – 1955

When Queen Elizabeth II was crowned in Westminster Abbey in 1953, all eyes should have been on her - but the tabloid press couldn't stop talking about her younger sister, Margaret, who was seen picking lint off the jacket of her supposed lover, air force veteran Peter Townsend. Speculation that the two were intimate had begun a year earlier, and here was "proof".

Townsend may have been 16 years older than the young, beautiful princess, but he was intelligent, worldly and handsome. There was just one problem: Townsend was fresh from a divorce with his wife, who had been unfaithful to him.

Queen Elizabeth II certainly felt sympathetic to her sister, but was caught in a difficult position. As the head of the Church of England, allowing her sister to marry a divorced man would directly conflict with her religious duties. Margaret, meanwhile, needed her sister's permission to marry, but would never have gained it. She could have gone to Parliament, but that would have caused an even larger embarrassment for the family. Besides, Churchill's staunchly Conservative cabinet indicated that they did not approve and no permission would have been given.

The young princess was faced with the unenviable choice between marrying the man she loved and losing her titles and income, or giving him up in the name of the crown. In 1955, Margaret reluctantly released a statement that she had decided not to marry Townsend. "Mindful of the Church's teaching that Christian marriage is indissoluble, and conscious of my duty to the Commonwealth, I have decided to put these considerations before any others." Margaret would marry another, Lord Snowdon, but it would end in a high-profile divorce.

Princess Margaret's passion for Peter Townsend was to end with a whimper

THE FORBIDDEN QUEEN

Follow the romantic beginning of the love affair that rocked the very foundations of England itself

Written by **Frances White**

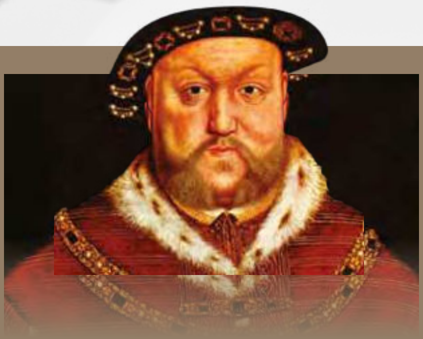
The sun streamed down on the brisk spring morning as a figure emerged near from four-turreted White Tower of the Tower of London. The crowd that had gathered there were oddly quiet; they watched silently as the slender woman passed through them. She was dressed in a loose, grey gown, so dark it was almost black, with a red petticoat underneath. An ermine mantle was draped around her neck, and her long dark hair was tied above her head, exposing her thin, dainty neck. Two of her ladies accompanied her as she climbed the scaffold that had been erected for the day's sombre event. Her steps were strong and firm, her countenance steely and unreadable.

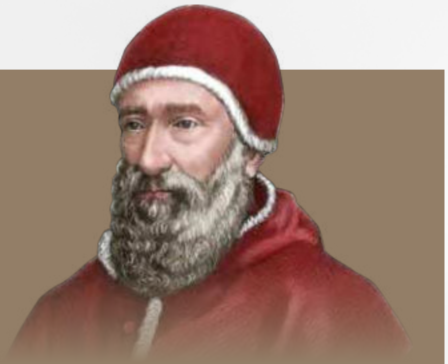
Although the strength of her steps was remarkable for one facing her death, when she turned to the crowd and spoke her voice trembled. However, her words rang out loud and clear. She begged the people to forgive her if she had not treated them with gentleness, and then prayed that God would have mercy for those who had condemned her. She ended by praying for the king, who was a good, gentle, and sovereign lord. All these things she uttered, but not once did she admit her guilt for the crimes she would die for. Her words were so sweet, her manner so graceful, that many gathered there shed a tear for the condemned woman.

She wished farewell to her weeping ladies, and removed her headdress, tucking her long, thick hair under a coif. As she knelt upright, one of her ladies came forward and tied a blindfold over her eyes. She began to mutter under her breath "Jesus receive my soul; O Lord God have pity on my soul", over and over again. She prayed silently as she received her husband's final gift, a swordsman of Saint-Omer; he had given her the mercy of a sword in place of an axe. The executioner raised the sword high, its sharpened blade gleaming in the sunlight, then brought it down upon her thin neck. It was all over in a single stroke. The queen was dead.

It is portrayed, often unfairly, that Anne Boleyn descended on King Henry VIII like some sort of wicked, conniving temptress, luring him away with her dark looks and feminine charms from his almost 24-year-long marriage, young daughter and queen beloved by the population. But Henry had been anything but loyal to Catherine, and had already fathered his illegitimate son Henry Fitzroy before Anne was in the picture. In fact, it had been Anne's sister, Mary, who initially caught the king's attention, and he conducted an affair with the older Boleyn sister that may have resulted in two more children. When Henry was first drawn to Anne, it is highly likely that he desired her simply as another mistress. But she had other plans.

The new lady in waiting was a captivating figure. Having recently returned from serving the French Queen Claude, she boasted an elegance and poise that instantly created a stir. Her dark features were unfashionable for the time, but her deep brown eyes and unusual beauty caught the attention of more than just the king. Among those competing for her affections were Sir Thomas Wyatt, an acclaimed poet, and Henry Percy, who even went as far as to secure Anne's hand in a secret betrothal. However, all those with their gaze fixed upon the enchanting young debutante soon found





CROWN V CHURCH

King Henry VIII

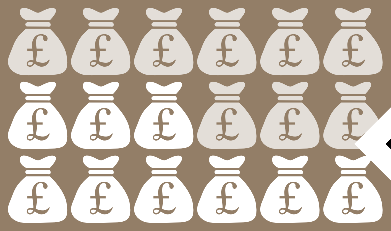
Pope Clement VII

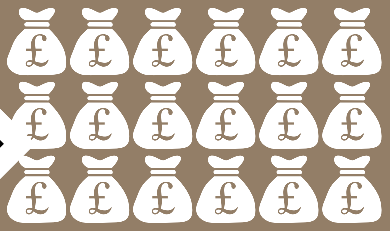
NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS

2 MILLION

OVER 75 MILLION

WEALTH





ON DIVORCE

"If a man shall take his brother's wife it is an unclean thing... they shall be childless"

King Henry VIII quoting the *Bible*, Leviticus, 20:21, as justification for seeking a divorce from Catherine of Aragon

"Forbids Henry to remarry until the decision of the case, and declares that if he does all issue will be illegitimate"

DRESS SENSE

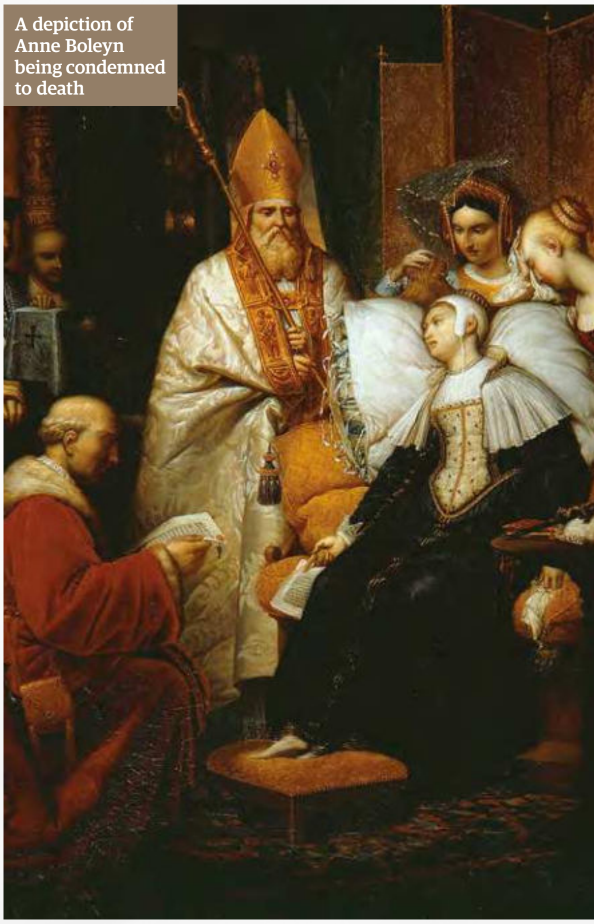
PURPLE VELVET, **ITALIAN AND FRENCH FASHION,** LARGE PUFFED SLEEVES, **FEATHERED HAT,** FUR MANTLE, **MULTIPLE EXPENSIVE PIECES OF JEWELLERY**

STRICT POPE ATTIRE, **CHOIR DRESS – A WHITE SILK CASSOCK,** SCULL CAP AND A LACE ROCHET

ON RELIGION

"For all the prelates at their consecration make an oath to the Pope clean contrary to the oath that they make to us, so that they seem to be his subjects, and not ours"

"Forbids any one in England, universities, parliaments, courts of law, etc, to make any decision in an affair the judgment of which is reserved for the Holy See"



A depiction of Anne Boleyn being condemned to death

Hever Castle was the childhood home of Anne Boleyn

TUDOR COURTSHIP

GET SET UP

As forced marriage is forbidden by the Church, marriages can't strictly be 'arranged', but couples are often matched up by their parents to ensure a suitor of acceptable social standing. Love matches do occur, but are only really acceptable if the wealth of both is suitable.

SHOWER HER IN GIFTS

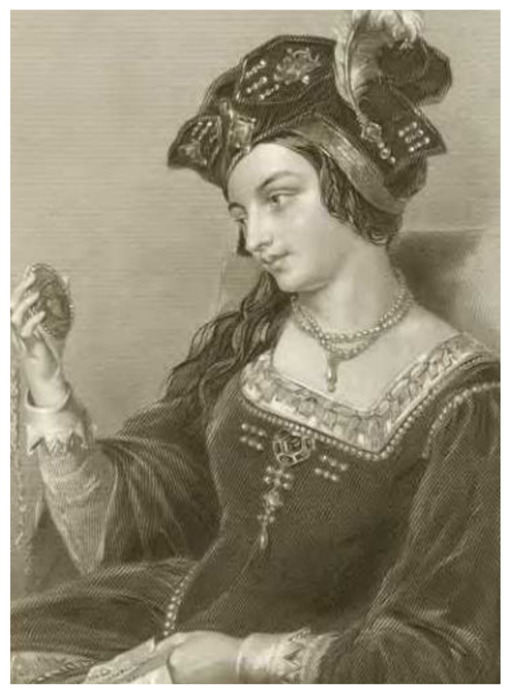
Once a suitable lady has been chosen, a Tudor gentleman will begin the first stage of courtship in which he will visit her frequently and bestow her with an array of valuable gifts to win her over. Ribbons, girdles and gloves can all be used to capture a lady's heart.

SHOW YOUR COMMITMENT

Known as betrothal or handfasting, when the couple have agreed to marry they will go through a period similar to a modern-day engagement. This often involves a public ceremony where pledges are made. After the betrothal the couple are allowed to begin sexual relations.

GET MARRIED

The marriage ceremony itself is a very public and high-profile affair in a church with the more guests the better. Wedding dresses will usually be the bride's best dress and, for those who can afford it, the ceremony will be followed by a great feast with food, music and dancing.



themselves facing a rival they could not hope to better – the king of England.

Henry prided himself on his image – he was obsessed with his appearance and was constantly attempting to prove himself as an accomplished, charismatic and capable leader. With his own claim to the throne emerging from the turbulent Wars of the Roses, he was determined to do everything in his power to secure his and his descendant's place as king. As models of the Renaissance man, Henry had a friendly rivalry with Francis I of France and did anything he could do to outmatch him. Anne was trained at the French courts herself, and boasted all the glamour, exceptional skills and intelligence Henry wished to embody himself. He wanted her instantly.

However, unlike her sister, Anne was not a weak-willed girl who would bow to the will of a man. Anne's courtly education in the royal palaces of the Netherlands and France had given her grace, elegance and a beautiful singing voice – but it had also given her one other thing: knowledge of the game of courtly love. She knew what became of the mistresses of kings; she had witnessed her own sister tossed aside the moment his attention had been drawn by another. She had already been denied the love of her sweetheart, Henry Percy, having been deemed unworthy by his father. Henry's obvious affection for her would provide the perfect opportunity to prove just how much she was worth. Anne did something no woman before her had dared to do: she said no to the king.

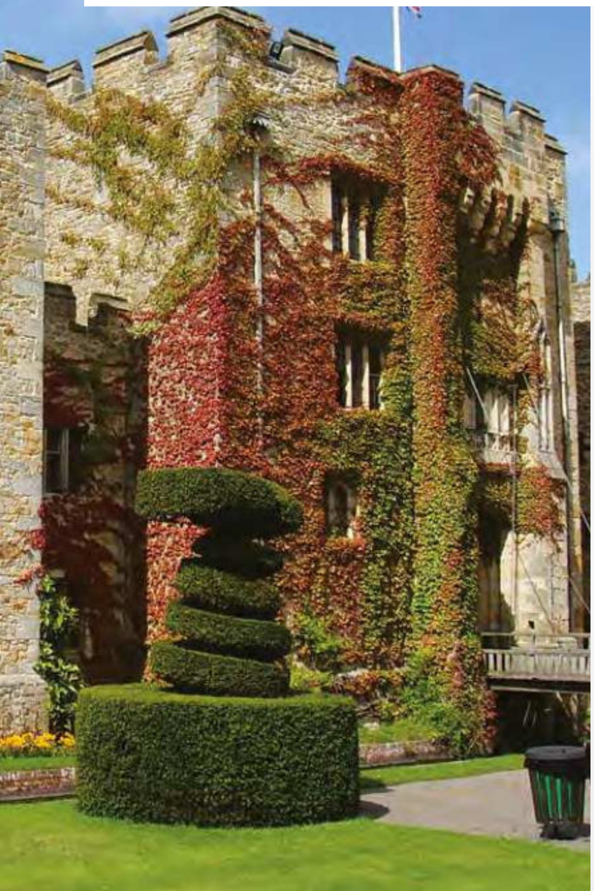
> "Anne knew what became of the mistresses of kings; she had witnessed her own sister tossed aside"

Rather than outraging him, Anne's rejection spurred Henry to chase her more fervently. He bestowed her with gifts, penned love letter after love letter, but the enchanting but strong-willed woman still said no. When he offered for her to be his official mistress, that too was rejected. She was everything all the women in his life had never been – rather than agreeing politely, she challenged his opinions, debating with him on subjects such as theology. She was passionate, brash and fiery, and she had well and truly set Henry alight. There was no doubt in his mind that such a young, virile woman would bear him the male heir that would ensure the continuation of his line.

Sometime in 1527, after a year of chasing her, he proposed marriage to Anne, and finally she said yes. While we have reams of Henry's love letters, and the extreme decisions that would follow his proposal as evidence of his strong feelings for Anne, we can only speculate on what was going on in the young woman's head. She was under immense pressure from her ambitious father and uncle to elevate the family name – something a match with a king would no doubt achieve – but the lengths to which Henry would go to ensure she became queen must have been captivating for the younger daughter of a family with commoner roots. Because Henry did indeed have great lengths to travel, there was the small matter of his current wife, the now-infertile Catherine of Aragon.

Henry, at least in the early part of his reign, was well known as a devout Catholic. He had even been named a so-called 'defender of the faith' by Pope Leo X, and it was to the Bible he turned to seek an annulment for his 24-year-long marriage to the mother of his only legitimate child to date. He argued with Pope Clement VII that his marriage to Catherine, who had been his late brother's wife, directly went against the words in Leviticus 20:21. But the Pope wasn't a fool; to allow the annulment would contradict the decision made by a previous infallible Pope to allow the marriage between Henry and Catherine in the first place. Again Henry was told no and again he was denied Anne and the male heir he so badly desired.

Henry had heard enough 'nos' so on 23 May 1533 he took matters into his own hands and ordered the newly elected and specially selected archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, to grant him the annulment he so desperately needed. That simple action would have consequences that would reach far beyond Henry or Anne's own life, forever



changing the religious and political landscape of the country, leading to the English Reformation. Breaking away from Rome was a rash, dangerous and groundbreaking move, but Henry finally had what he wanted – he was allowed to marry the enchanting Anne. And it was just in time, because she was already pregnant, and any child born out of wedlock could not be king.

Anne was paraded through the streets of London in a grand ceremony; she sat upon swathes of fine cloth resting on two regal horses. She was crowned with St Edward's crown, a crown only worn previously by monarchs, perhaps indicating the male heir she was presumed to carry in her belly. Anne's family immediately felt the boons of their new powerful connection. Her father became Earl of Wiltshire, her cousin Earl of Ormond and even Mary, Henry's previous mistress, received an annual pension of £100. Spirits in the royal court were high, but beyond the palace gates, the public were unconvinced. In their eyes not only had Anne ousted a beloved queen, but she was also responsible for the ripples created after the break with Rome; the people needed something stable to place their hopes in – they needed a male heir.

> "Anne was paraded through the streets of London in a grand ceremony"

They would have to wait. On 7 September 1533 Anne gave birth, but it was not to the son she had expected. It was a daughter. She was christened 'Elizabeth' in honour of Henry's mother, but this did little to comfort his disappointment. The documents were changed, the tournament that celebrated the birth of an heir cancelled and the people's discontent grew. Doubts began to grow in Henry's mind; not only had Anne failed to produce the male heir she had promised him, but also the qualities that had made the young Boleyn girl so enchanting and desirable as a mistress were proving unsuitable for the wife of a king.

After being married to Catherine of Aragon for so long, Henry was used to having an obedient, reliable and submissive wife. Anne was anything but this. She would openly speak her mind and express opinions contrary to Henry's. Catherine had silently watched as Henry indulged himself with various mistresses beneath her nose, but Anne reacted with extreme jealousy toward any woman that got close to him, as she herself was aware of how easily her husband's gaze could travel. He had sacrificed his faith and rocked the very foundations of the country for her, but now Henry was not so sure about Anne, and neither was anyone else.

The pressure on Anne at this point was immeasurable. She was desperate to cling to power, not only for herself, but for the good of her family and her daughter, and her only chance of keeping a grasp on it relied on something completely out of her control. Sadly for Anne, the pressure upon her was not about to ease up, and she suffered a miscarriage just one year into her tenure as queen. Fate itself seemed positioned against her when again in 1536 she miscarried another baby, this time a boy. For Henry, and many others, there was more than fate at work here, and he accused Anne of seducing him with spells. The fact she was unable to bear a healthy son was, apparently, further proof that Anne was cursed. Considering the public's already poor opinion of her, it would not take much for them to believe that Anne was a harbinger of ill omens and quite possibly a witch sent to lead their king and country astray. Not only was she disobedient, fiery and opinionated, but she was also unable to produce a future king. Everyone was in agreement – Anne needed to go.

As Anne recovered from her miscarriage, Thomas Cromwell, Henry's chief minister, set about plotting her downfall. Cromwell had his own reasons to fear the influence of Anne; the two had argued where the money from the dissolution of the monasteries should go, and he had seen where Anne had sent her other enemies, such as Sir Thomas More – to the chopping block.

ENGLISH REFORMATION IN NUMBERS

1 in 50 was in religious orders

800
religious houses taken over by Henry

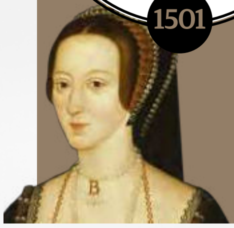
10,000
monks, nuns, friars and canons lost their homes

£84,324,100
The amount the crown profited per year as a result of the Reformation

200
The years the monarchy had been trying to suppress religious power

30,000
The number of people who took part in the Pilgrimage of Grace against the Reformation

THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF ANNE BOLEYN



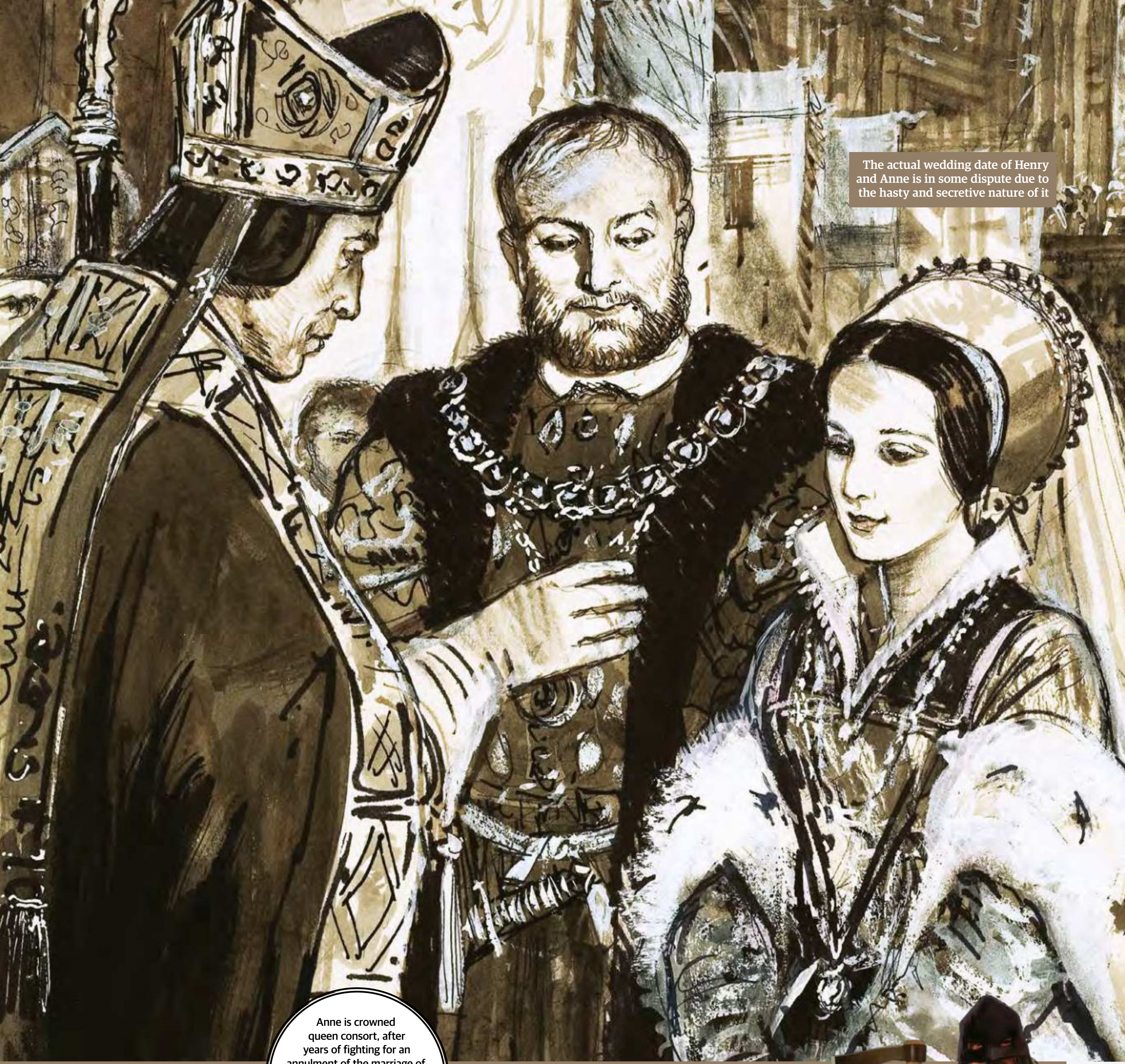
1501
Anne is born to Thomas Boleyn and Lady Elizabeth Howard, the second daughter born to the couple after Mary. The Boleyns are a very respected family of the English aristocracy. The date of Anne's birth is also argued to be 1507.

1513
Anne is sent abroad to receive an education in Europe and joins the schoolroom of Margaret of Austria. Here she learns all the skills expected of a Tudor noblewoman, such as horseback riding, dancing, singing and writing.

1515
Anne becomes maid of honour to Queen Claude of France. Here she develops many of the skills that will later impress the king, such as art, fashion, etiquette and most importantly, the game of courtly love.

1522
Anne's father summons her back to England to marry James Butler to settle a dispute over land and titles. The marriage arrangements come to a sudden halt, possibly because Thomas Boleyn has a grander suitor in mind for his youngest daughter.

1522
Anne makes her debut at the Chateau Vert pageant. She attracts the attention of Sir Thomas Wyatt and Sir Henry Percy. She later secretly betroths Percy, but it is cut off by his father and Anne enters into the service of Catherine of Aragon.



The actual wedding date of Henry and Anne is in some dispute due to the hasty and secretive nature of it

Henry VIII loses interest in Anne's sister, Mary, and begins to court Anne. He sends her a series of love letters, but Anne refuses to be his mistress. Within a year Henry asks Anne to marry him and she accepts.

1526

Anne is crowned queen consort, after years of fighting for an annulment of the marriage of Henry and Catherine. Anne is already pregnant with Elizabeth and in September of that year she is born, much to Henry's disappointment.

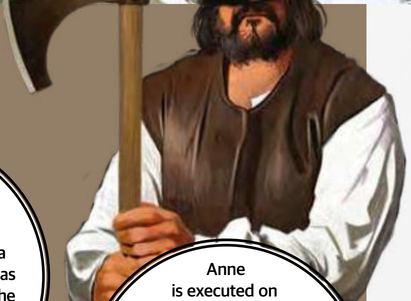
1533

The relationship between Anne and Henry becomes strained as Anne suffers a miscarriage. By the time she falls pregnant again in 1535, Henry is already courting Jane Seymour. Anne also miscarries this child, who appears to be male.

1534

Various men are arrested on charges of adultery with Anne and treason against the king in a plot masterminded by Thomas Cromwell. Anne is taken to the Tower of London, tried and found guilty of adultery, incest and high treason.

1536



Anne is executed on a scaffold by a French swordsman brought in especially for the beheading. Before her death she praises Henry, perhaps to save Elizabeth and her family from any further implications, but refuses to admit her guilt.

1536

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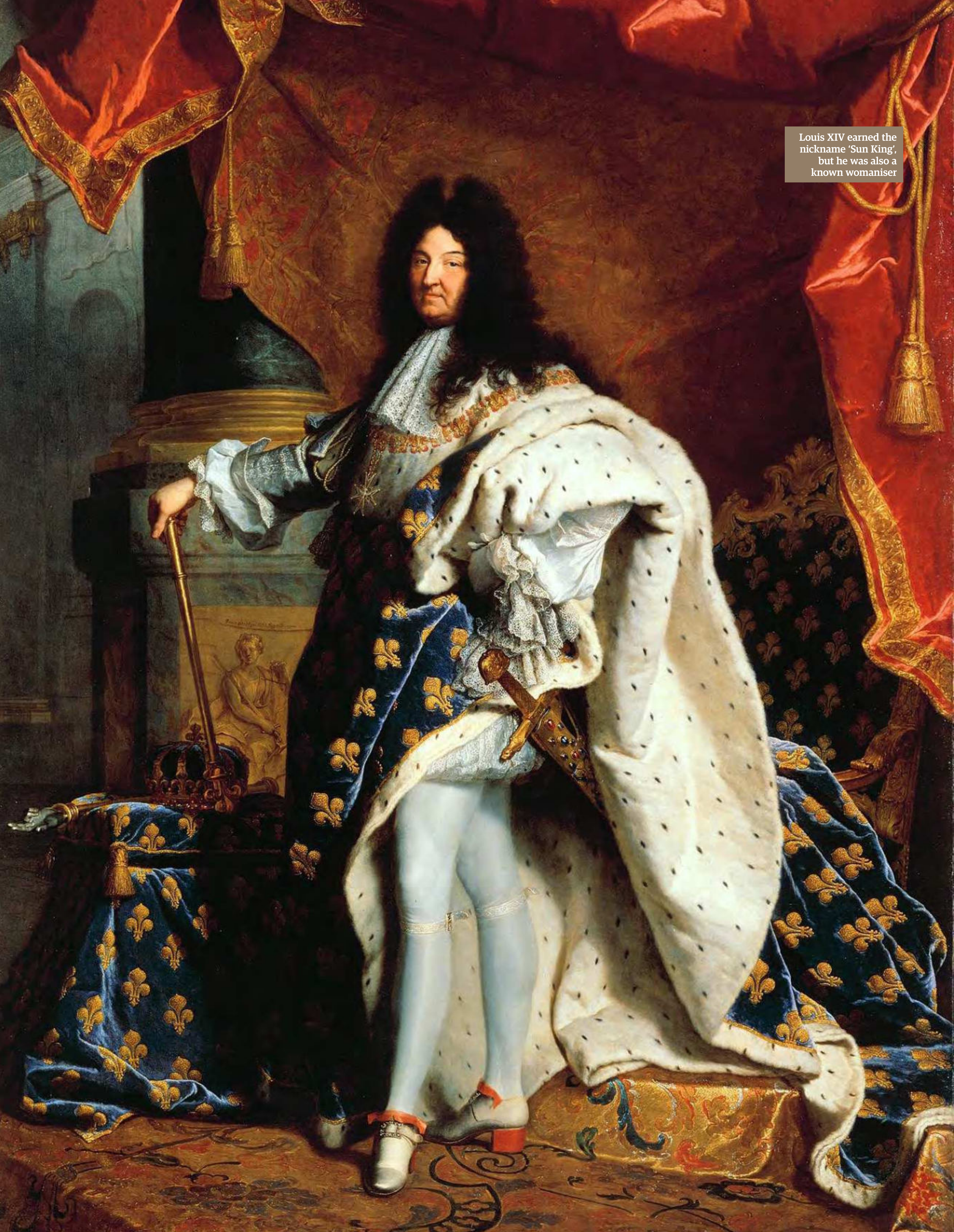


Louis XIV earned the nickname 'Sun King', but he was also a known womaniser

LOUIS XIV'S LOVE LIFE

Jump between the sheets with the bed-hopping monarch who had an insatiable appetite for women

Written by **Scott Reeves**

On 7 June 1660, King Louis XIV of France and Infanta Maria Theresa of Spain met for the first time on the Isle of Pheasants, a small island in the River Bidasoa on the France-Spain border. A marriage between the double cousins was thought to be the best way to seal an alliance between their two countries after years of war.

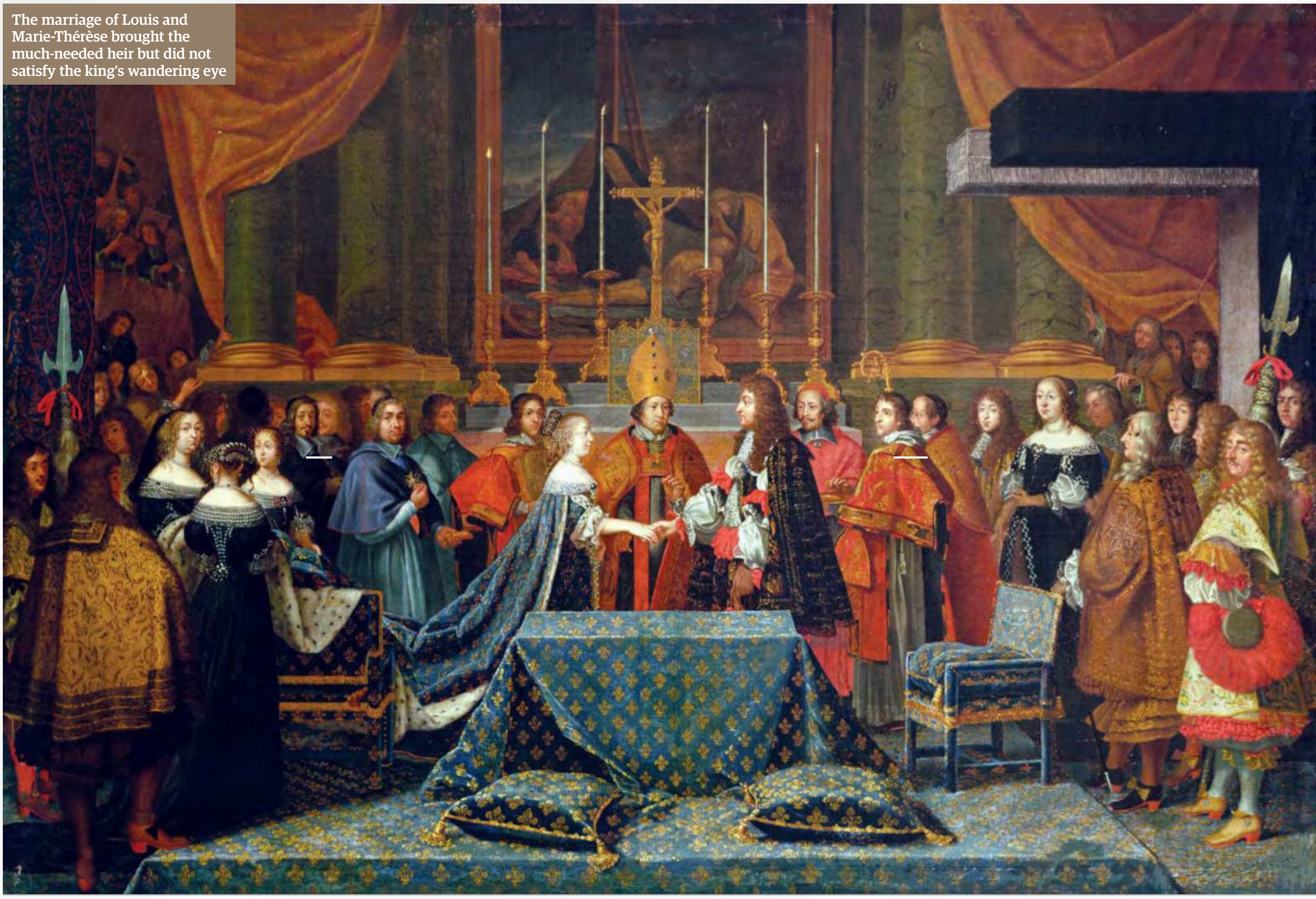
The wedding ceremony of Louis and Marie-Thérèse (as she would be known in France) occurred two days later and the king was keen that the marriage was consummated as soon as possible. One likes to think that he wanted to ensure nothing could break the new peace deal, but it's more likely that the king simply could not wait to jump into bed with his new bride.

Queen Anne - mother of the groom, aunt of the bride - had prepared for the occasion well in advance. In 1653, she had arranged for one of her ladies in waiting to find her way into 15-year-old Louis' bed. In return for teaching Louis everything he needed to know about sex, the loyal courtier was rewarded with a pension and a mansion in Paris. Louis quickly put his newly acquired skills to the test. He began a relationship with Olympe Mancini, niece of his chief minister Cardinal Mazarin, but their three-year fling came to an end when Olympe was married off to the Comte de Soissons in 1657. Their son was born a suspiciously short six months after the wedding. Then Louis' eyes wandered to Olympe's younger sister, Marie. So deeply did the king fall for her that courtiers began to wonder whether the monarch had marriage on his mind - a prospect that horrified Queen Anne, who knew that royal weddings had little to do with love. She was already working on the sensible match with the Spanish princess.

Like her sister before her, Marie was packed off to marry an alternative, who was surprised to discover his new bride was still a virgin. Whatever their feelings for each other, Louis and Marie had managed to remain chaste. Such self-restraint was surprising considering the king's past record. By the time he married, Queen Anne had also chased away another courtier who caught Louis' eye and the daughter of a gardener found herself giving birth to the king's daughter.

The birth that everybody in France really wanted occurred in November 1661. Queen Marie-Thérèse had a boy, securing the immediate future of the Bourbon dynasty. Baby Louis, the dauphin, was healthy and strong. The queen had succeeded in her primary duty, to give birth to an heir, and Louis dedicated a 1664 celebration at Versailles to France's two queens, his wife and his mother. But the week-long festivities, dubbed the Pleasures of the Enchanted Island, had a sting in the tail. Anne, Marie-Thérèse and the 600 courtiers in attendance could hardly miss the attention the king was showering on Louise de La Vallière.

Louise had first drawn the king's eye when she was appointed an attendant to Princess Henrietta of England, who married Louis' younger brother in 1661. Rumours had circulated that the wrong brother was visiting Henrietta's bed. Louis was certainly keen to spend time with his sister-in-law, but he deemed it prudent to find excuses for his regular visits. Henrietta's idea was to pretend that Louis was actually courting Louise, a 17-year-old with "an exquisite complexion, blond hair, blue eyes, a sweet smile". What could go wrong?



The marriage of Louis and Marie-Thérèse brought the much-needed heir but did not satisfy the king's wandering eye

> "The suggestion that the king had been seduced because of dark arts was enough to ensure Louis distanced himself from his favourite lover"

The trouble was that Louis fell for his own ploy. The king was entranced by the young beauty who shared many of his own interests; horse riding, hunting, music and literature. Louise seems to have been in love with Louis as he was with her. She did not care for titles and riches (although Louis was certainly generous with those) but was concerned that her royal affair went against the teachings of the Church. In 1662 she fled court to a convent just outside Paris. Louis chased after her and persuaded her to return.

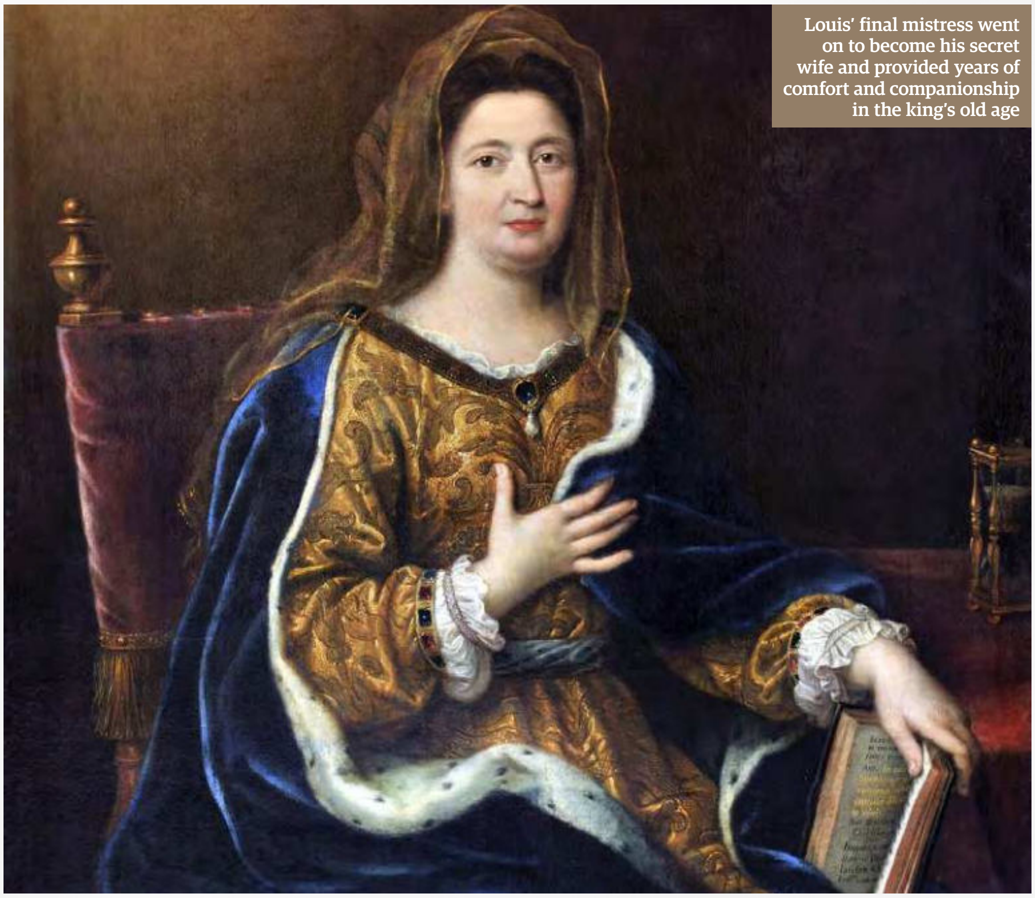
Louise had five children with the king, but the first three didn't survive infancy. The fourth was legitimised in May 1667, just before Louis left for war with Spain (his marriage not proving particularly effective at ending the conflict). At the same time, pregnant Louise was made a duchess, and given more estates and the title Mademoiselle de Blois, although she was not too impressed with the king's generosity - to her, they seemed the kind of presents given to a retiring servant.

In that she was right. Louis and Louise were hardly exclusive partners - apart from the queen, Louis had affairs and one-night stands with several other courtiers - but Louise had always been the one he returned to. Now he had fallen for his next great love, and while Louise preferred quiet tenderness behind closed doors, his new mistress made no secret of her position as maîtresse-en-titre (chief royal mistress).

Françoise-Athénaïs de Rochechouart, the Marquise de Montespan, openly pursued the king and sought to replace Louise in his affections, despite being married herself. When both Louise and the queen were pregnant, Madame de Montespan offered to entertain the king. No doubt she was clever, cultured and funny, but she was also happy to flaunt her "astonishingly beautiful" physical attributes, including accidentally dropping her towel when she knew Louis was watching her in the shower. However, Madame de Montespan would later rue the determination with which she pursued the king.

Madame de Montespan was given an apartment conveniently close to Louis at Versailles, and in 1669 she gave birth to the first of seven children with the king. However, the adultery incurred the wrath of the Church and, in 1675, priests refused to give her the absolution necessary for her to take communion at Easter.

It got worse. In 1677, Madame de Montespan was accused of engaging the services of a witch to win the affections of the king. According to her accusers, Madame de Montespan had visited Catherine Monvoisin, known as La Voisin, and the two prayed to the devil. They sacrificed children, making potions out of infants' blood and bones to



Louis' final mistress went on to become his secret wife and provided years of comfort and companionship in the king's old age

surreptitiously slip into Louis' food. Madame de Montespan also allowed a priest to perform a black mass with her naked body on the altar and plotted the death of the king when their relationship hit rocky ground.

Merely the suggestion that the king had been seduced because of dark arts was enough to ensure Louis distanced himself from his favourite lover. He personally believed the allegations were nonsense, although it is possible that she visited La Voisin in the hope of securing a love potion that would help her woo the king. However, so horrifying were the trumped-up accusations that they actually helped Madame de Montespan avoid a grisly fate – it was in no one's interest for the king to be linked to such lurid details, and so she was allowed to drift away from court.

Inevitably, Louis had a replacement lined up. He had already tested the field during Madame de Montespan's pregnancies. Several of those who ended up in bed with the king did so with the blessing of Madame de Montespan, who preferred to keep Louis close at hand with her own ladies in waiting, and even her own sister. However, the one who lasted was Françoise d'Aubigné, Marquise de Maintenon, a widow who had been entrusted with the care of Madame de Montespan's royal offspring. Louis was impressed with the older woman and declared, "Madame de Maintenon knows how to love. There would be great pleasure in being loved by her." The libertine had discovered his ideal companion for his old age.

The old and new mistresses were chalk and cheese. While Madame de Montespan liked to flaunt her position, Madame de Maintenon was happy staying in the shadows. So discreet was she that it is unclear exactly when she and the king moved from platonic friendship to something more physical. What we do know is that after Queen Marie-Thérèse died in 1683, the king opted to marry Madame de Maintenon in a secret, private ceremony. Such was the gulf in their social ranks that any children would not be able to inherit land or titles, but considering Louis was 45 and his new wife was three years older, it was likely a moot point anyway.

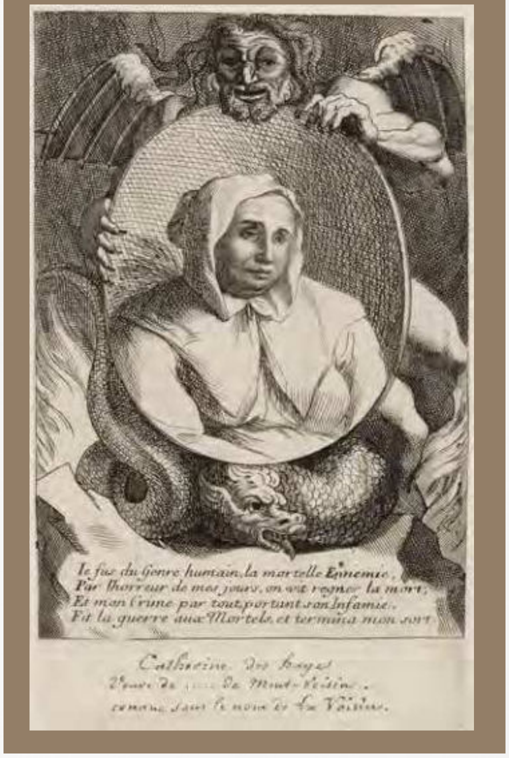
The king spent time in Madame de Maintenon's apartments every day, but it was no longer all about the sex; he valued his new wife's political and religious opinions. She encouraged him to do right by his previous children mothered by Madame de Montespan, promoting them in court and seeking good marriage matches for them. Eventually, Louis' infidelities ground to a halt as he realised that he had everything he wanted and needed in his new wife.

It turned out to be an oddly domesticated ending for a monarch who had bed-hopped his way around the Palace of Versailles. The Sun King had affairs with a dozen or so women in all and sired around 18 children – the true numbers will never be known – but we can be certain that few monarchs have provided gossips with as much to talk about.

AFFAIR OF THE POISONS

The downfall of Madame de Montespan came about as part of a wider investigation into a shady network that flourished in France. An underworld community of witches, fortune tellers and alchemists peddled love spells, charms and poisons, attracting custom from members of the court elite. Among the products on offer were shirts laced with arsenic that would leach into a victim's skin and enema solutions containing mercuric chloride to poison their unlucky users.

The most prominent of the sorceresses was Catherine Monvoisin, La Voisin, who reportedly supplied Madame de Montespan with potions and poisons. However, if the king's mistress did visit the suspected witch, she was probably not the only one. Police records indicate that as many as a dozen courtiers may have bought potions or charms to win over the king. La Voisin was also alleged to have supplied poison to Olympe Mancini, one of the king's first mistresses, who did not take being put aside well and sought to kill Princess Henrietta and Louise de La Vallière.

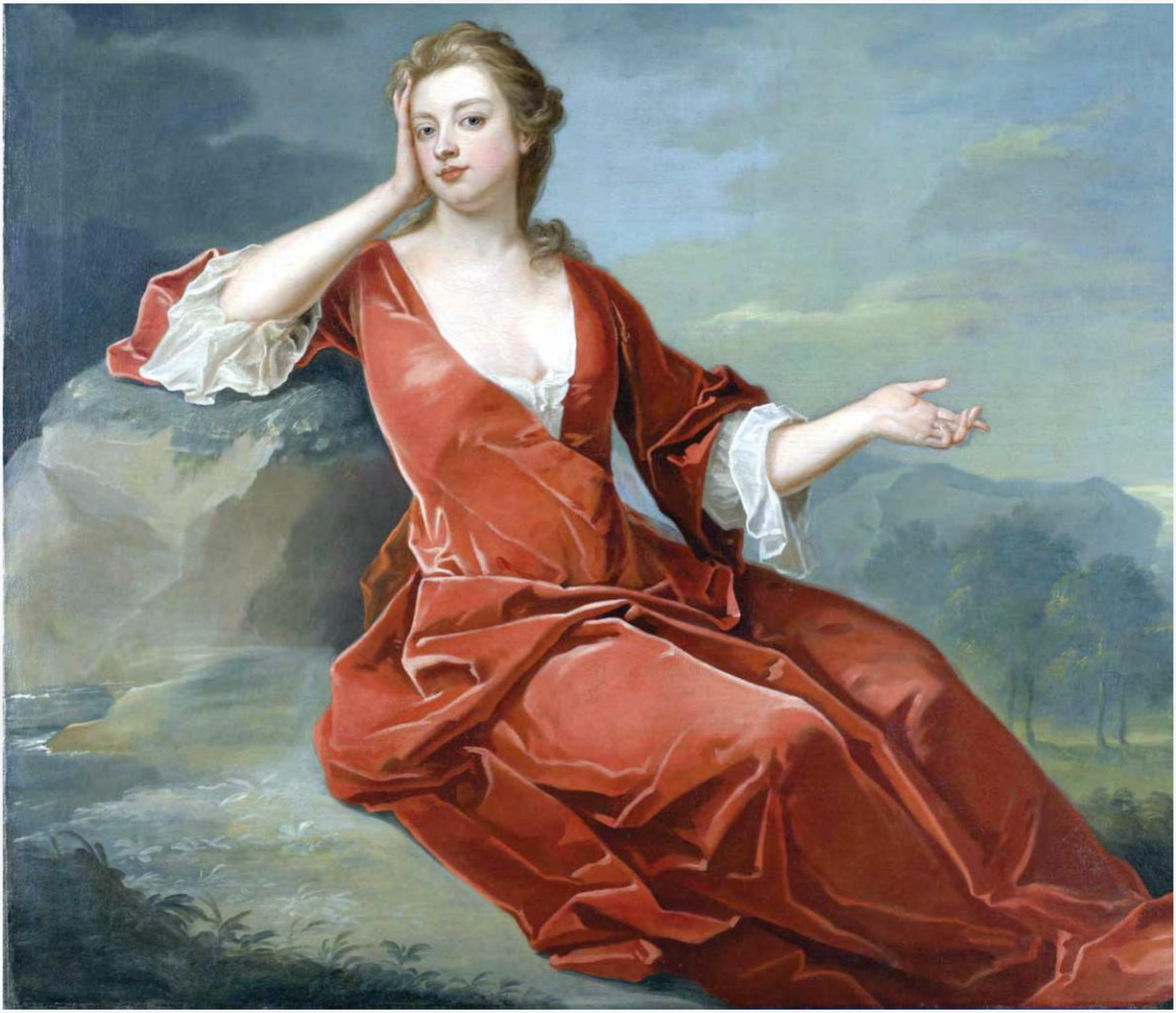


Ie fus du Genre humain, la mortelle Ennemie,
Par l'horreur de mes jours, on vit regner la mort;
Et mon Crime par tout, portant son Infamie,
Fit la guerre aux Mortels, et termina mon sort
Catherine des hayes
Veuve de [illegible] de Mont-Voisin.
connue sous le nom de la Voisin.

QUEEN ANNE'S REAL FAVOURITE

The Favourite drew audiences to the lesser-known time period of Queen Anne, but what's the real story behind the rise and fall of Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough?

Written by **Andrea Zuvich**

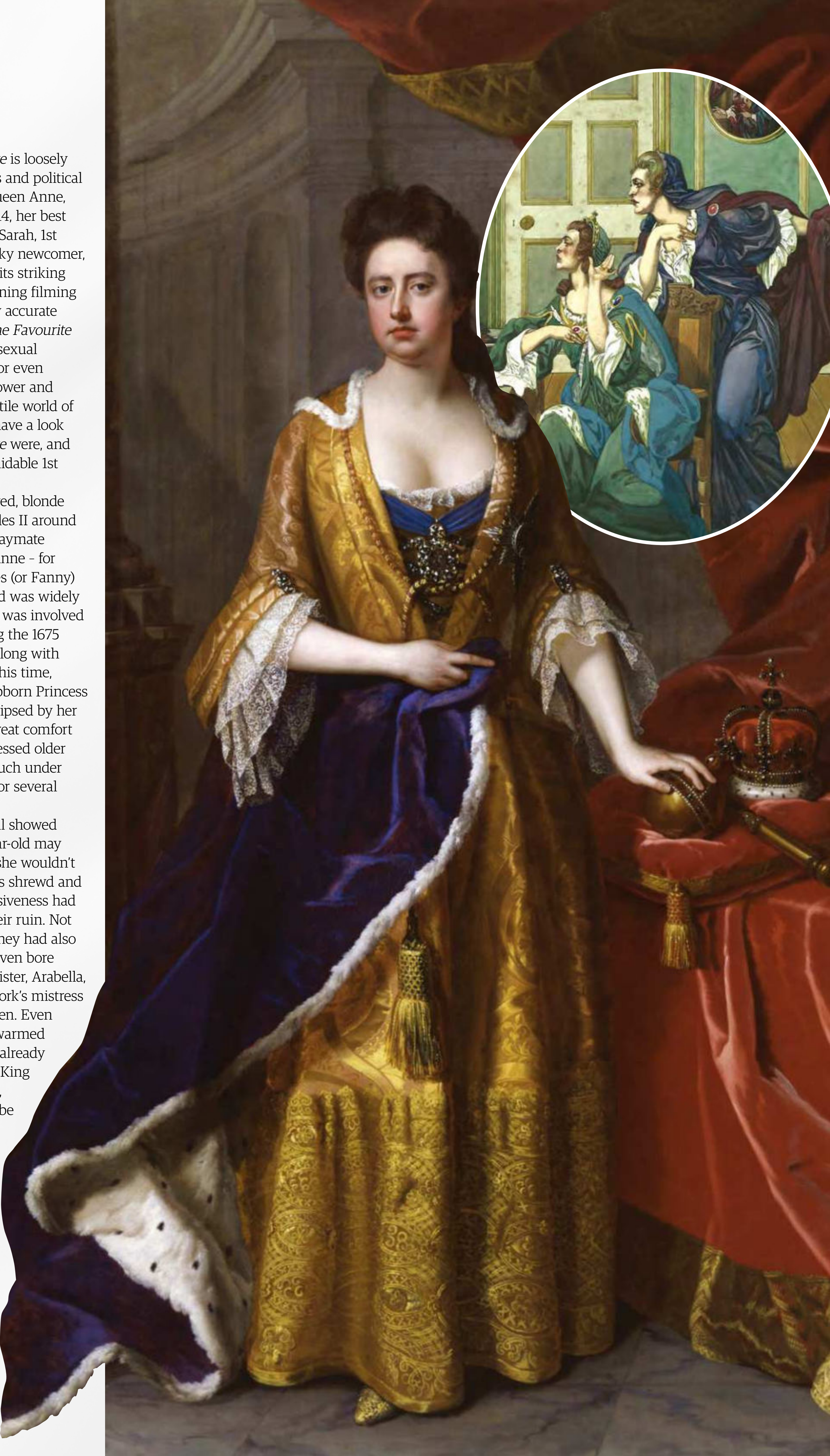


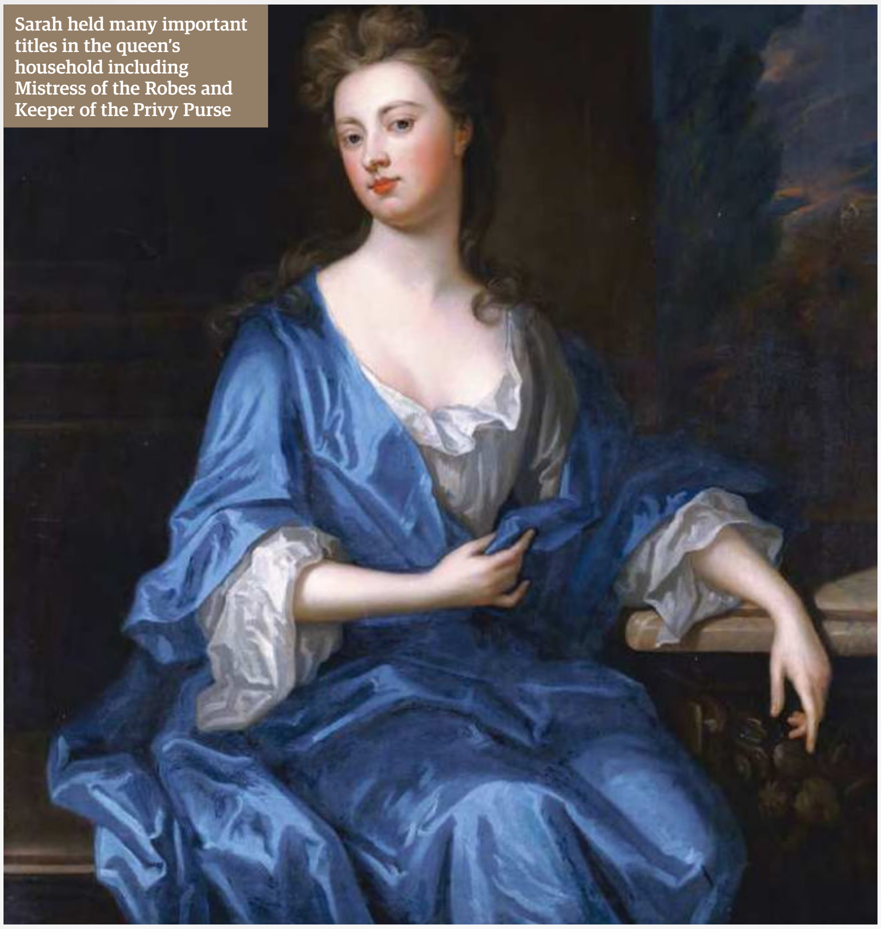
The 2018 film *The Favourite* is loosely based on the relationships and political machinations between Queen Anne, who reigned from 1702-1714, her best friend of several decades, Sarah, 1st Duchess of Marlborough, and the plucky newcomer, Sarah's cousin, Abigail Hill. But, for all its striking costumes, impressive acting, and stunning filming locations, it is not the most historically accurate portrayal of these historical figures. *The Favourite* suggests providing Queen Anne with sexual pleasure and friendship was the best, or even the only, way for women to achieve power and political control in the sometimes volatile world of early 18th-century government. Let's have a look at who the real people of *The Favourite* were, and in particular, Sarah Churchill, the formidable 1st Duchess of Marlborough.

Sarah Jennings was a bright blue-eyed, blonde beauty who came to the court of Charles II around the age of 12, having already been a playmate of the Princesses of York – Mary and Anne – for some years. Sarah's elder sister, Frances (or Fanny) Jennings, had been at court longer, and was widely considered to be a court beauty. Sarah was involved in many aspects of court life, including the 1675 masque, Calisto – which she acted in along with Anne and other court ladies. Around this time, Sarah befriended the very shy yet stubborn Princess Anne, five years her junior. Usually eclipsed by her beautiful older sister, Mary, it was of great comfort to Anne to have this radiant, self-possessed older girl notice her. Anne was soon very much under Sarah's thumb – where she would be for several decades to come.

When the 25-year-old John Churchill showed a romantic interest in Sarah, the 15-year-old may have readily given him her heart, but she wouldn't give her body to him as easily. She was shrewd and had seen how love and sexual permissiveness had led other young women at court to their ruin. Not only had they lost their virginity but they had also wrecked their reputations, and some even bore illegitimate children. Churchill's own sister, Arabella, had by then become James, Duke of York's mistress and given birth to several of his children. Even Fanny was rumoured to have briefly warmed the Duke's bed. Churchill himself had already indulged in a sexual relationship with King Charles II's stunning mistress, Barbara, Lady Castlemaine – who happened to be Churchill's cousin.

Later in life, Sarah wrote, "Women signify nothing unless they are the mistress[es] of a Prince or a first Minister, which I would not be if I were young; and there are few, if any women, that have understanding or impartiality enough to serve well those they really wish to serve". If Churchill wanted to bed Sarah, he would be allowed to do so only once they were married. His family objected to her as his bride, for she





Sarah held many important titles in the queen's household including Mistress of the Robes and Keeper of the Privy Purse

was from a poor family. They eloped, however, in 1678, with the consent of the Duchess of York, and their marriage proved to be long, passionate, loving, and fertile. Sarah could be notoriously difficult - even her own children generally agreed on that. She was fiercely devoted to the people she loved, and was an equally fierce opponent to her enemies.

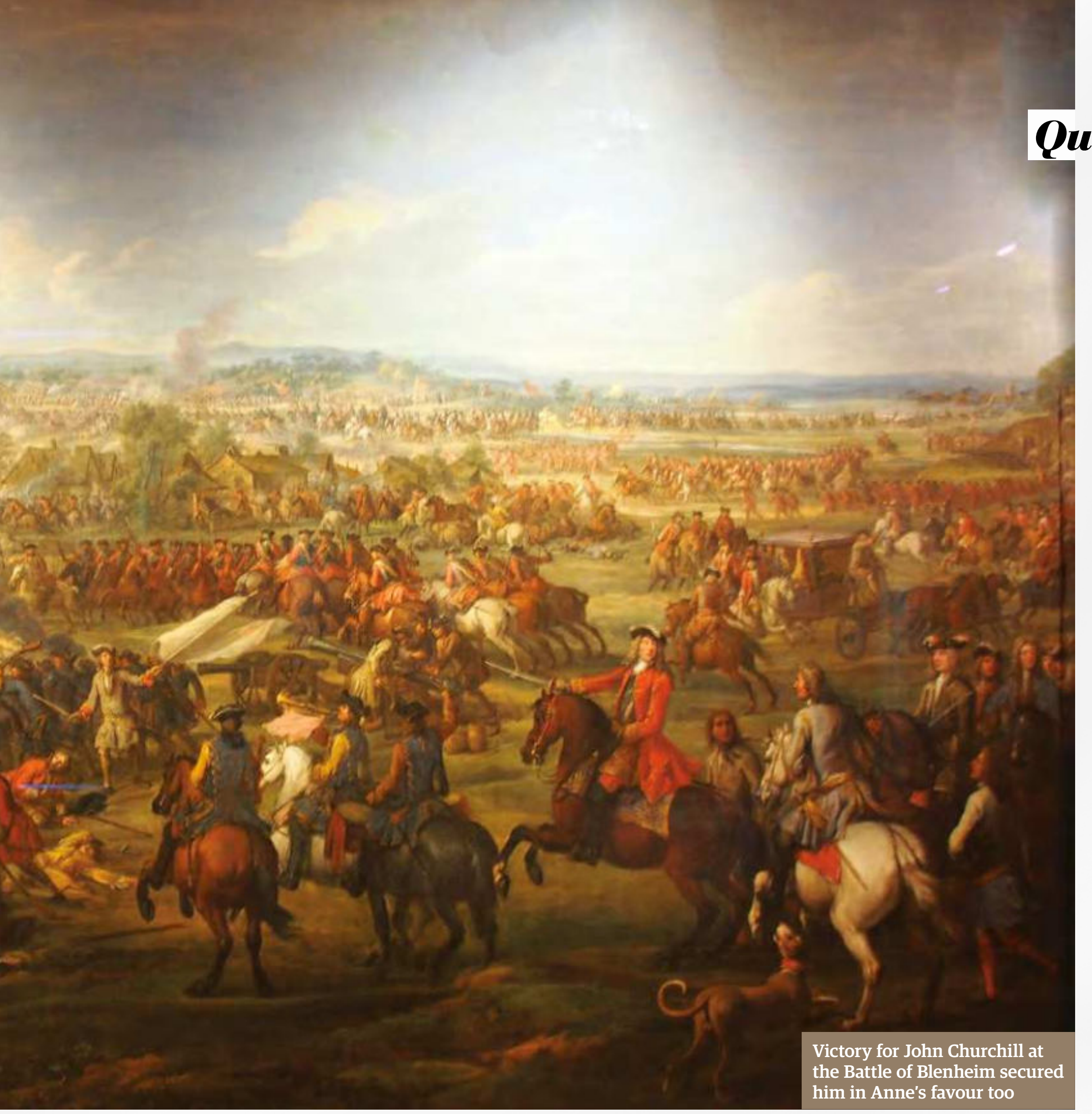
Anne already had concerns that her father, King James II, would return England to popery. It was Sarah who, in that crucial year 1688, cemented these concerns in Anne's mind and firmly encouraged the Princess to leave London to side with William of Orange, thus abandoning her father in his hour of need. In 1689, Anne's sister, Mary, and her husband, William, were crowned William III and Mary II. By 1692, however, Mary could see that her sister was regularly manipulated by Sarah, and she wrote to Anne asking her to end the friendship. This led to a terrible row between the sisters - and it certainly had people talking. John Evelyn wrote, "28th February, 1692. Lord Marlborough having used words against the King, and been discharged from all his great places, his wife was forbidden the Court, and the Princess of Denmark was desired by the Queen to dismiss her from her service; but she refusing to do so, goes away from Court to Syon". The two sisters were neither reconciled nor ever met again, for Mary died of smallpox in 1694.

"Sarah's bullying of Anne seems to have increased"

Princess Anne married Prince George of Denmark in 1683. After her marriage to George, Anne made Sarah her Lady of the Bedchamber. It was also during this time that Anne and Sarah began using pseudonyms to refer to one another; Sarah and Churchill were "Mr and Mrs Freeman" while Anne and George were "Mr and Mrs Morley". George, "of the Danish countenance, blond, of few words", proved a good husband for Anne, and enjoyed a loving and faithful marriage; but their tragedy stems from the fates that befell their many children. They had between 16 to 18 pregnancies, which ended in miscarriage, stillbirth, or where the child died at a young age from disease. Their longest-living son, the Duke of Gloucester, died in the summer of 1700, at the age of 11. It is often - unfairly - said that Queen Anne was a weak woman; but to lose so many children and not lose one's reason arguably takes great strength. The death of the only Protestant heir was a blow to Anne's hated brother-in-law, William III, too, and it had political repercussions: The Act of Settlement (1700) stated: "The Princess Sophia, Electress and Duchess Dowager of Hanover, Daughter of the late Queen of Bohemia, Daughter of King James the First, to inherit after the King and the Princess Anne, in Default of Issue of the said Princess and His Majesty, respectively and the Heirs of her Body, being Protestants".

William III died during the winter of 1702, from pneumonia. Within the same year that she became queen, Anne conferred various honours on the Earl of Marlborough, making him Duke of Marlborough and a Knight of the Garter. By 1705, Sarah, now Duchess of Marlborough, was clearly a supporter of the Whig Party, which Anne was not - and this caused friction to in their friendship. Their relationship had also deteriorated following the death of the Duke of Gloucester, when Sarah's bullying of Anne seems to have increased.

How did someone like Abigail Hill rise to the top of Anne's court? Abigail, born around 1670, was Sarah's first cousin. Her family was hit hard financially and Abigail and some of her siblings were obliged to go into service. When Sarah was made aware of this situation with her poor relations, she obtained work for some of them in the royal household. Abigail's sister, Alice, was given employment with Anne's son, the Duke of Gloucester, as a laundress. When Queen Anne was a princess during the reign of Charles II, she had a governess, four dressers, one laundress, one seamstress, and a necessary woman - this was enlarged when she became queen. As a Lady of the Bedchamber, Abigail was in close proximity to the queen. She would not have obtained this position had she not been connected to Sarah, but once



Victory for John Churchill at the Battle of Blenheim secured him in Anne's favour too

Abigail was there, this resourceful woman did her job well, and the queen noticed.

In 1707, while Sarah was absent from court, the queen attended the marriage of Abigail to Samuel Masham, who, although a rather poor baronet, was still considered above her in station. When Sarah discovered that this had taken place without her knowledge, she was incensed. Sarah knew that if her power over Anne declined, this would have negative ramifications on her husband, John, and their children's fortunes. But this didn't stop Sarah from being extremely rude to Anne. She treated her like a little girl, and notoriously told her to "be quiet!" outside St Paul's Cathedral. It is no wonder, therefore, that someone who feels increasingly hounded, bullied, and disrespected by their best friend, will gravitate to another who is kinder and more obliging. Abigail, although a mere bedchamber woman, increasingly provided the compassionate and deferential treatment that Anne needed. We can't be certain if she was sincere in her behaviour towards Anne, but her technique in handling Queen Anne worked, driving a wedge between the queen and her favourite.

In 1708, Prince George died, another massive blow to Anne's already greatly bereaved state. In *The Favourite*, Queen Anne is depicted as a very ill woman, distressed by a variety of painful health problems including gout, and suffering from short-sightedness. This was certainly true. During her youth, her eyes were considered so poorly, that she was sent away to the French court to have her vision treated by the more experienced eye physicians there. She had survived smallpox when she was 12. Her body had gone through the emotional and physical upheaval of so many pregnancies. These ailments were exacerbated by the fact that she was also overweight, if not obese.

In 1709, a salacious work entitled Secret Memoirs And Manners Of Several Persons Of Quality was published in London. Although given fake names, the thinly-veiled Duke and Duchess of Marlborough were mentioned in it several times, including references to Churchill's past sexual relationship with Barbara Villiers.

As Abigail Masham was becoming firmly entrenched as the new royal favourite, her cousin, the Tory politician Robert Harley, was on the ascent. He knew he needed to get the Duchess of Marlborough out of the way. Around this time, Anne gave Abigail's brother John Hill the regiment recently made vacant by the death of the Earl of Essex. This was a blatant snub to Marlborough, who was Hill's undoubted superior in all things military. Things became so bad between the two factions that some of the Duke of Marlborough's close supporters began to wonder if they should put the queen on the spot during Parliament and ask her to sack Mrs Masham. They ended up deciding against this, but that they considered it indicates the political power that came with being the queen's favourite.

Not only was Abigail in the Tory camp, it has been argued that she was also a Jacobite. In 1712, Abigail (and the Tories) had well and truly supplanted Sarah (and the Whigs) in Queen Anne's heart, and the Marlboroughs were dismissed from court and fled abroad.

Queen Anne died in a coma at Kensington Palace following a probable stroke in 1714. According to the Act of Settlement, the throne was now in the hands of Electress Sophia's eldest son, Georg Ludwig, who would rule as King George I from 1714-1727. Although the Marlborough family's fortunes had gone downhill at the tail-end of Queen Anne's reign, things improved in the Georgian era - but only in some aspects. For example, they returned to England and Marlborough was given his old position as Captain-General. There were more troubles to come, however - not least when Sarah had tremendous fallings-out with several of her children, including her daughters, Henrietta and Mary. Then, worst of all, John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, died in 1722 - before the construction of Blenheim Palace was completed.

Towards the end of her life, Sarah Churchill published her memoirs, entitled An Account Of The Conduct Of The Dowager Duchess of Marlborough, in 1742. This fascinating book gives us great insight into her views on events that occurred and people she knew in her life.

The 1st Duchess of Marlborough died on 18 October 1744 - bringing to an end the life of one of the most powerful and wealthy women in the world. She was 84 years old - an impressive age to reach, especially in the Early Modern period. Her will stipulated that she wished to be buried at Blenheim Palace near the body of her "Dear Husband", John, late Duke of Marlborough and, accordingly, the couple remain interred side-by-side in the palace chapel to this day.

While *The Favourite* is largely fictional, it is nonetheless an enjoyable, visually stunning romp that is based on the story of these historical persons, bringing their tales to life.

A QUEEN'S SEXUALITY

Many asked after seeing *The Favourite*, "Was Queen Anne a lesbian? Did she engage in sex with her favourites?" It's very hard to categorically state the nature of a historical person's sexuality, but the answer is probably not. The rumours and insinuations levelled against the queen and Abigail Masham were more likely due to the political and personal manoeuvrings of a bitter and resentful woman - Sarah Churchill - who was angered by the loss of her powerful status to someone whom she considered as her social inferior (Abigail). At the time, accusing someone of having same-sex relations, particularly when they held so important a political role as someone like Queen Anne, was a common tactic used in order to discredit and ruin a rival. After all, the moral tone of Queen Anne's court was much the same as that set by the previous monarchs, William and Mary, who had sought to establish the antithesis of the debauched and sexually profligate flavour of the Restoration. The film also largely, if not wholly, omits mention of one of the important people in Anne's life: her beloved husband of 25 years, Prince George of Denmark.

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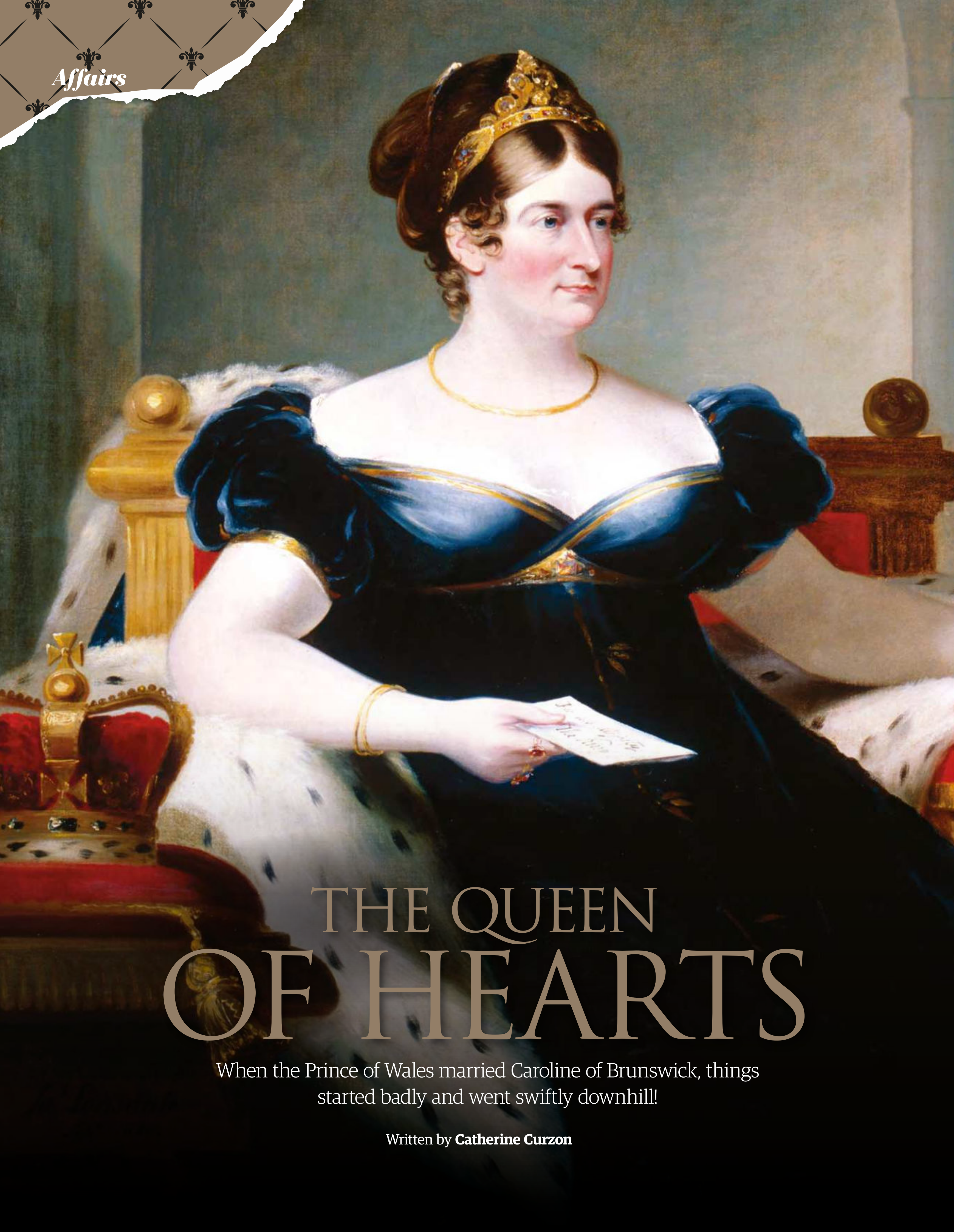


THE QUEEN OF HEARTS

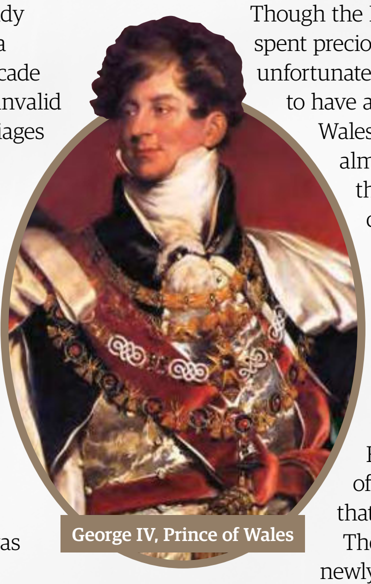
When the Prince of Wales married Caroline of Brunswick, things started badly and went swiftly downhill!

Written by **Catherine Curzon**

Some marriages are made in heaven. Others, such as that of George, Prince of Wales, and his cousin, Caroline of Brunswick, are straight from hell. Far from being a romantic fairytale, when Caroline married the heir to the throne, it was the start of one of the most vitriolic and scandalous royal tales that history has ever known.

Today we're used to our media-savvy royals gazing into one another's eyes, filled with hope for the future and dreams of a happy family, but in the Georgian era, love often didn't come into it. In the case of George and Caroline, the marriage was one of necessity. A compulsive spender with a love of women, George was drowning in debt. When he went cap in hand to his father, King George III, and begged for a handout, the monarch offered him a deal. If the prince would agree to marry Caroline, the daughter of the king's sister, then his debts would be settled. Caroline's family, meanwhile, accepted the suit readily. The princess had proven difficult to match with a prospective husband so to be offered the hand of the heir to one of the most powerful thrones in the world was an offer they couldn't and wouldn't turn down.

What the Prince of Wales didn't think to mention was the little fact that he was already married, having secretly wed Maria Fitzherbert, a Catholic widow, a decade earlier. Though that marriage was invalid under the terms of the Royal Marriages Act, Maria Fitzherbert considered it binding. Yet George knew that he had been checkmated and grudgingly said yes, he would marry Caroline of Brunswick. She was duly summoned to England and plans were laid for a glittering royal wedding. Upon arrival she found that her appointed lady-in-waiting was to be none other than Frances Villiers, the Countess of Jersey. Lady Jersey was a scheming and manipulative social climber. She was also the mistress of the Prince of Wales and, keen to stay in her lover's favour, was determined to report back on everything that Caroline said or did. There were, as was once said, three people in the marriage from the start.



George IV, Prince of Wales

The omens for the couple were terrible from the beginning. Upon arriving in London and meeting the prince, Caroline declared that he was far fatter than his portraits and not half so handsome. For his part, George carped that Caroline's stench turned his stomach. At their very first meeting George demanded brandy to calm his horrified nerves then ran to the company of his mother. The public thought differently though, and as the family settled to a tense supper on the eve of the wedding, vast crowds gathered at the palace walls and called for the princess to give them a wave. This she did, much to the chagrin of her unpopular fiancé, who slammed the window to keep out the noise. It was an inauspicious start to a marriage of convenience that lurched from one scandalous disaster to another, and all of it in the full glare of the public spotlight.

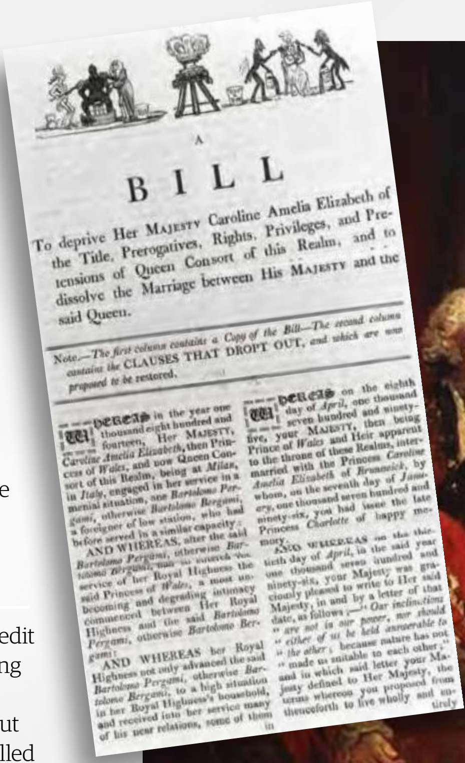
It wasn't a blushing bridegroom who made his way to the altar of the Chapel Royal in St James's Palace on 8 April 1795. Instead, George was insensible with drink. The Prince of Wales was so paralytic throughout his wedding ceremony that his groomsmen had to physically drag him to the altar then hold onto him to keep him upright. He wept openly during the vows and tried to crawl from the chapel on his hands and knees as the Archbishop of Canterbury led the party in prayers. When the wedding night rolled around, it went as well as might be expected. Far from carrying his blushing bride over the threshold, George passed out in the thankfully empty fire grate. Caroline left him there and climbed into bed alone.

Though the Prince and Princess of Wales spent precious few nights together, the unfortunate couple somehow managed to have a child. Princess Charlotte of Wales, their only offspring, was born almost nine months to the day of their wedding. George, however, claimed that his bride was not only unhygienic, but far from virginal. Though he had dozens of lovers and she very likely had had none before her husband, George declared that he could never be intimate with her again or he would be left physically ill. For this royal couple, the concept of the heir and the spare was one that would remain unfulfilled.

The writing was on the wall for the newlyweds and within two years of that fateful ceremony in St James's Palace, the Prince and Princess of Wales were irretrievably estranged. For George, however, matters were typically complicated. Though he might hate Caroline, his father, George III, adored her. His own marriage to Charlotte, the prince's mother, was devoted and he had hoped that wedding bells might be all that were needed to set his eldest son on the straight and narrow. Seeing how George was treating Caroline, the king was incensed. His sympathies were all with the humiliated, dumped

> "Caroline declared that he was far fatter than his portraits and not half so handsome"

bride. George III knew too well of the prince's dissolute and immoral ways. He knew too of Maria Fitzherbert, having heard rumours regarding the entanglement even if he was never made aware of the wedding that had taken place all those years ago.



A

BILL

To deprive Her Majesty Caroline Amelia Elizabeth of the Title, Prerogatives, Rights, Privileges, and Pretensions of Queen Consort of this Realm, and to dissolve the Marriage between His Majesty and the said Queen.

Note.—The first column contains a Copy of the Bill—The second column contains the CLAUSES THAT DROPT OUT, *and which are now proposed to be restored.*

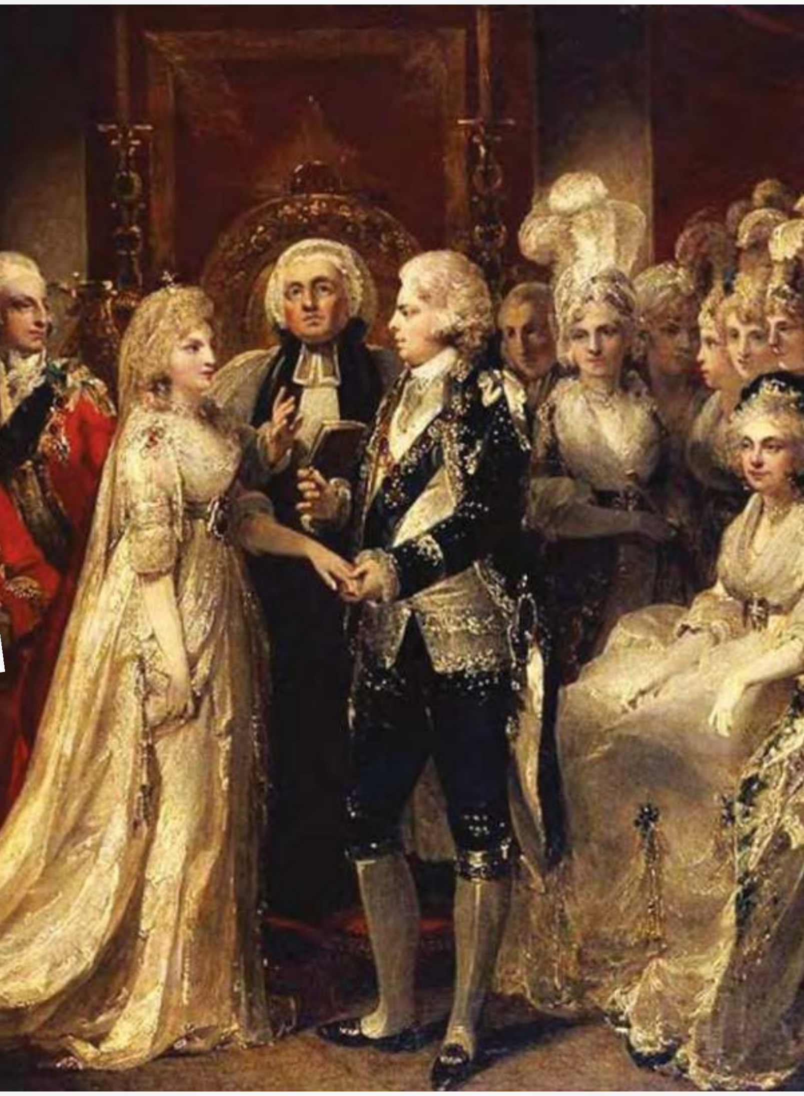
WHEREAS in the year one thousand eight hundred and fourteen, Her Majesty, *Caroline Amelia Elizabeth*, then Princess of *Wales*, and now Queen Consort of this Realm, being at *Milan*, in *Italy*, engaged in her service in a menial situation, one *Bartolomo Pergami*, otherwise *Bartolomo Bergami*, a foreigner of low station, who had before served in a similar capacity:

AND WHEREAS, after the said *Bartolomo Pergami*, otherwise *Bartolomo Bergami*, had so entered the service of her Royal Highness the said Princess of *Wales*, a most unbecoming and degrading intimacy commenced between Her Royal Highness and the said *Bartolomo Pergami*, otherwise *Bartolomo Bergami*:

AND WHEREAS her Royal Highness not only advanced the said *Bartolomo Pergami*, otherwise *Bartolomo Bergami*, to a high situation in her Royal Highness's household, and received into her service many of his near relations, some of them in

WHEREAS on the eighth day of *April*, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-five, your Majesty, then being Prince of *Wales* and Heir apparent to the throne of these Realms, intermarried with the Princess *Caroline Amelia Elizabeth* of *Brunswick*, by whom, on the seventh day of *January*, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-six, you had issue the late Princess *Charlotte* of happy memory.

AND WHEREAS on the thirtieth day of *April*, in the said year one thousand seven hundred and ninety-six, your Majesty was graciously pleased to write to Her said Majesty, in and by a letter of that date, as follows;—"*Our inclinations* "*are not in our power, nor should* "*either of us be held answerable to* "*the other*; because nature has not "made us suitable to each other;" and in which said letter your Majesty defined to Her Majesty, the terms whereon you proposed from thenceforth to live wholly and entirely



When Caroline of Brunswick met the Prince of Wales on the eve of their wedding, she complained that he was nothing like his pretty portraits

For George though, Mrs Fitzherbert was yesterday's news and whilst the Prince of Wales went back to his womanising ways, Caroline set up residence across town. At her home in Blackheath she became a celebrated hostess, often entertaining the prince's most influential political foes. This drove George to distraction and he became convinced that she must be sleeping with the illustrious men who beat a path to her door, seeing this as the final humiliation. He did all he could to discredit Caroline, including accusing her of having an illegitimate child and subjecting her to a lengthy enquiry into her conduct, but Caroline continued to prevail. The so-called Delicate Investigation found that William Austin, the child George claimed was proof of his wife's infidelity, was in fact the son of a destitute couple. William's mother had come to Blackheath in search of work and Caroline had offered to take her son into her home and raise him with the best of everything. When William's parents appeared at the enquiry, the verdict became inevitable.

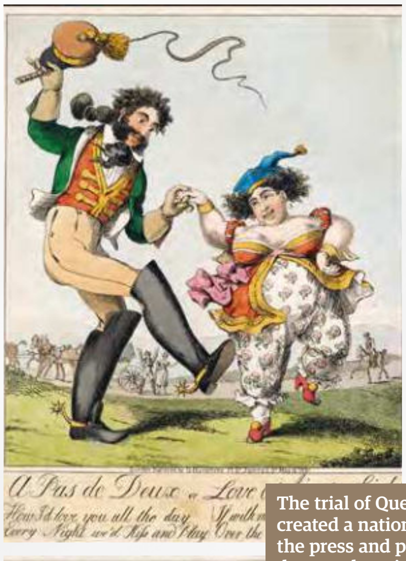
Far from providing proof that the wife of the heir to the throne had conceived a child with another man, all that the Delicate Investigation managed to prove was that Caroline was even more charitable and caring than had already been known. By the time the investigation found her not guilty of adultery, the public had fallen for the queen of hearts. They absolutely loved Caroline and her celebrated philanthropy as much as they hated George, who was loathed for his largesse and shamelessly immoral ways, all of it funded by the hard-pressed taxpayer. William Austin, meanwhile, the little boy saved from poverty at Blackheath, became Caroline's faithful retainer until the day of her death.

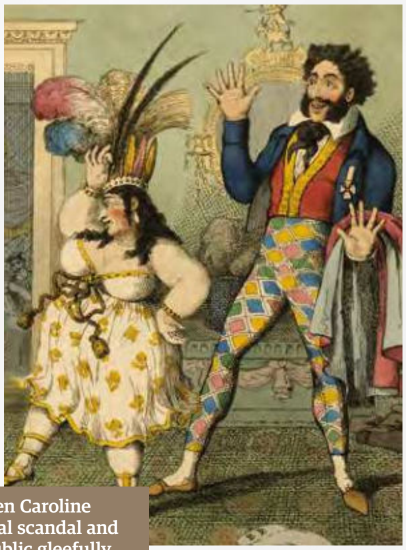
Tired of her husband's spies and with her access to her only child restricted following the Delicate Investigation, Caroline came to believe that she would never be able to live the life she wanted if she remained in England. Though it meant leaving her daughter, Charlotte, behind, Caroline left Britain and travelled to Europe, stopping first in her homeland of Brunswick before she continued on her way. Once she was embarked on her continental travels Caroline really began to kick up her heels and there was nothing her furious husband could do about it. She travelled the continent and settled in Italy, where she took up with a former soldier named Bartolomeo Pergami. The Princess of Wales installed the dashing gentleman as her chamberlain and, if the rumours were to be believed, her lover too. The couple lived openly together with Pergami's young daughter and in the United Kingdom the people rejoiced at the knowledge that she was making a right royal fool of her husband.

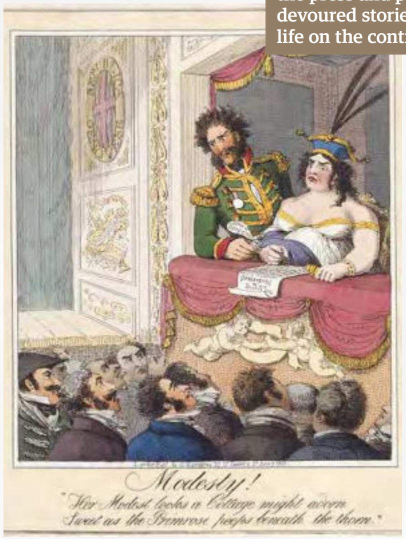
> "The Prince of Wales was so paralytic during his wedding that his groomsmen had to drag him to the altar"

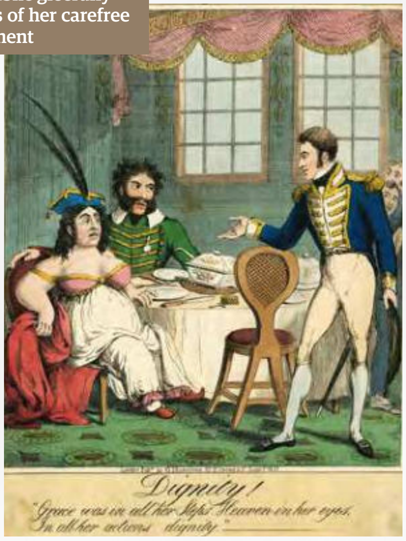
Through all of this, George seethed and fretted. Though he had no shortage of lovers of his own, the knowledge that Caroline had managed to win not only the love of the people but also find personal happiness drove the capricious prince into a fury. He sent spies to Europe, intending to gather evidence of her adultery and secure a divorce once and for all. George's agents interviewed witnesses and servants and began to assemble a pile of circumstantial evidence, including rumours of shared beds, of the couple bathing together or trysting in sheltered carriages. They even reported back on whether the amount of urine in a bedroom chamberpot suggested that it had been used by one or two people overnight! The prince was certain that it was dynamite and when he had all the evidence he could muster, he delivered it to Parliament along with a request for a divorce.

What George hadn't reckoned with was the ill health of his ailing father. With his son reigning as Prince Regent since 1811, George III had been confined at Windsor for almost a decade. Blind, immobile and totally in the grip of his infamous madness, the old king died on 29 January 1820. Suddenly the Regent was catapulted onto the throne and for the newly-enshrined King George IV, nothing could be more embarrassing than his fun-loving wife, who was reported to dance without her stays and cavort in gowns that left nothing to the imagination. With time pressing and his coronation approaching, George was determined that she wouldn't be crowned as


A Pas de Deux – Love
How I'd love you all the day
Every Night we'd Kiss and Play Over the




Modesty!
"Her Modest looks a Cottage might adorn
Sweet as the Primrose peeps beneath the thorn."


Dignity!
"Grace was in all her Steps Heaven in her eyes,
In all her actions dignity"

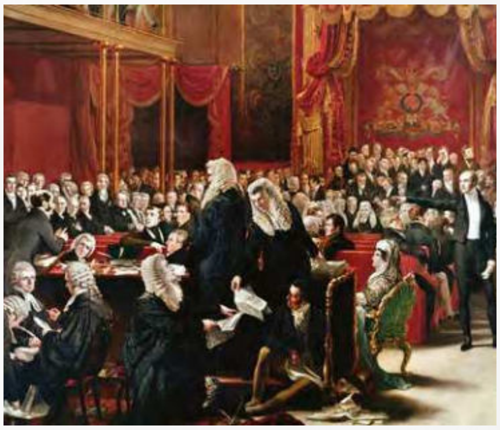
The trial of Queen Caroline created a national scandal and the press and public gleefully devoured stories of her carefree life on the continent

THE LOST PRINCESS

According to the Prince of Wales he and his bride, Caroline of Brunswick, were intimate only three times. Nine months almost to the date of their wedding their only child, Princess Charlotte of Wales, was born. Charlotte was a bright and feisty young woman, who had a love of politics and drama, and the public adored her. Her marriage to Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld was blissful but it was also short. Tragically, Charlotte died whilst delivering a stillborn child.

Across Britain, people grieved as they never had before. Haberdashers sold out of black cloth, schools and public buildings closed as a mark of respect and some shops feared bankruptcy as the country ground to a halt to mourn. Wracked by guilt, Sir Richard Croft, the respected doctor who had delivered Charlotte's stillborn son, later took his own life.

George, however, didn't think to tell Caroline that her only daughter was dead. She found out by accident, when a royal messenger on his way to deliver the news to the pope happened to stop off near her residence in Italy. It was the final straw for the embattled princess and she was determined to come back fighting against her estranged husband.

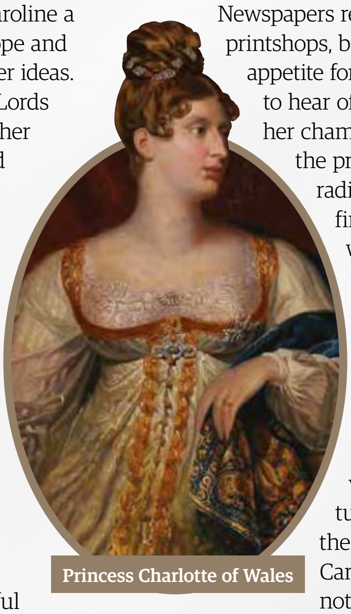


queen alongside him. More than anything, he needed to finalise that divorce.

Although Parliament offered Caroline a generous payment to stay in Europe and keep her head down, she had other ideas. Determined to face the House of Lords and the divorce proceedings that her husband had initiated, she headed for Britain and arrived to a hero's welcome. She was greeted by the Pains and Penalties Bill, an audacious scheme to put Caroline on trial for adultery. If she was found guilty, she would lose her title, her reputation would be in tatters and her marriage would be over. With his carefully gathered evidence, George was sure he couldn't lose.

Of course, just as he was in so many things, George was proved wrong. Ably defended by her skilful counsel, Henry Brougham, 1st Baron Brougham and Vaux, Caroline cut a confident figure before the Lords. Brougham savaged the witnesses for the prosecution and outside the walls of Westminster, the public couldn't get enough of the scandal. Newspapers reported daily on proceedings and printshops, balladeers and diarists fuelled the appetite for gossip. Far from being outraged to hear of Caroline's supposed fling with her chamberlain, the public loved it, and the princess became a rallying point for radicals and romantics alike. She was finally showing the dissolute George what it was like to be humiliated and as the trial limped along, he began to realise that he had made a terrible mistake.

However, the Lords found in favour of George by the narrowest majority imaginable and the bill passed with a majority of just nine votes. Across the country the mood turned bitter and Lord Liverpool, the prime minister and no friend to Caroline, declared that the bill would not proceed to the Lords. There was to be no divorce for George and Caroline.



Princess Charlotte of Wales

The delighted Caroline basked in her triumph. She was not only still married, she was now on the road to becoming queen and when the day of the Coronation came around, Caroline was at Westminster Abbey by dawn. She toured from door to door demanding admission but found them all barred to her on the express orders of the new king. Some of the doorkeepers jeered at Caroline's efforts and to add to the humiliation, so did the public who had for so long adored her. Never before had Caroline misjudged the mood of the country so badly as she did on that day in July 1821. The people who had gathered to watch the magnificent Coronation procession did so because they were ready to party. They no longer had any time for Caroline's drama and, just as they had built her up, now they tore her down.

Humiliated, Caroline retreated into seclusion in Brandenburg House and died within a few short weeks. King George IV was finally free of the woman he hated. Yet it was a pyrrhic victory, for the monarch's health was failing too. Decades of feasting and carousing had left him obese and sickly and he died less than a decade after his wife, as isolated at Windsor as his beloved father had been before him. For Caroline and George, the ill-fated cousins who became husband and wife, the price of marriage had been high indeed.

© Alamy, Getty, Wiki Images

THE DANCER WHO TOPPLED A KING

Shocking audiences around the world with her provocative performances, Lola Montez and her lies caused chaos wherever she went

Written by **Jessica Leggett**

Beautiful. Manipulative. Salacious. These are just a handful of the words used to describe Lola Montez, the Irish woman who achieved international fame and notoriety thanks to her sensual performances and her fake identity as 'the Spanish dancer'. Continuing her deception, she managed to become the mistress of King Ludwig I of Bavaria, an illicit relationship that helped trigger the downfall of his reign. So who exactly was the real Lola Montez and how did she bring down a king?

Born as Eliza Rosanna Gilbert in Ireland, 1821, she was the daughter of Edward Gilbert, a British army officer and Eliza Oliver, a milliner's assistant and the illegitimate daughter of Charles Silver Oliver, an MP and the former high sheriff of Cork. The family moved to India in 1823 but Edward succumbed to cholera shortly after their arrival, leaving behind his young wife and daughter.

> "Lola was not a talented dancer but she made up for it with her unshakable confidence and irrepressible sex appeal"

The following year, the elder Eliza remarried and sent her daughter back to Britain to attend school and stay with relatives. When she was 16, the young Eliza defied her mother's wishes for her to marry Sir Abraham Lumly, later described by Lola in her autobiography as "a rich and gouty rascal of 60 years", instead eloping in Ireland with a young lieutenant named Thomas James. They moved to Calcutta, India, but the marriage disintegrated after five years – Lola would later comment that "runaway matches, like runaway horses, are almost sure to end in a smash-up". When the divorce was granted, both parties were banned from remarrying while their former spouse was living.

Divorced and disowned by her family, Eliza seized the opportunity to reinvent herself and travelled to Spain to train as a dancer, assuming the guise of a widow of a Spanish nobleman. Adopting the stage name Lola Montez, she made her London debut at Her Majesty's Theatre, Haymarket, in 1843, earning rapturous applause with her Spider Dance, swivelling her hips and lifting her skirts while stomping on plastic spiders. However, she was quickly recognised as 'Mrs James' and the story spread in the papers, causing a backlash. Lola wrote to the press to defend her 'Spanish' identity – which was, of course, a lie – but it was clear that her London career was over just as it was beginning.

Despite this setback, Lola built upon the scandal of her London appearance and went on tour the following year, performing in Munich, Warsaw, St Petersburg and Paris – where she apparently hurled her slipper at the audience from the stage after being booed by hecklers. Lola was not a talented dancer but she made up for it with her unshakable confidence and irrepressible sex appeal.

Making a name for herself as a dancer on the Continent, Lola came into contact with distinguished figures such as Tsar Nicholas I of Russia and the writer George Sand, becoming well-known for her love of smoking and drinking and her fiery temper. She also had numerous affairs with notable men such as composer Franz Liszt and writer Alexandre Dumas, quickly gaining a reputation as a courtesan.

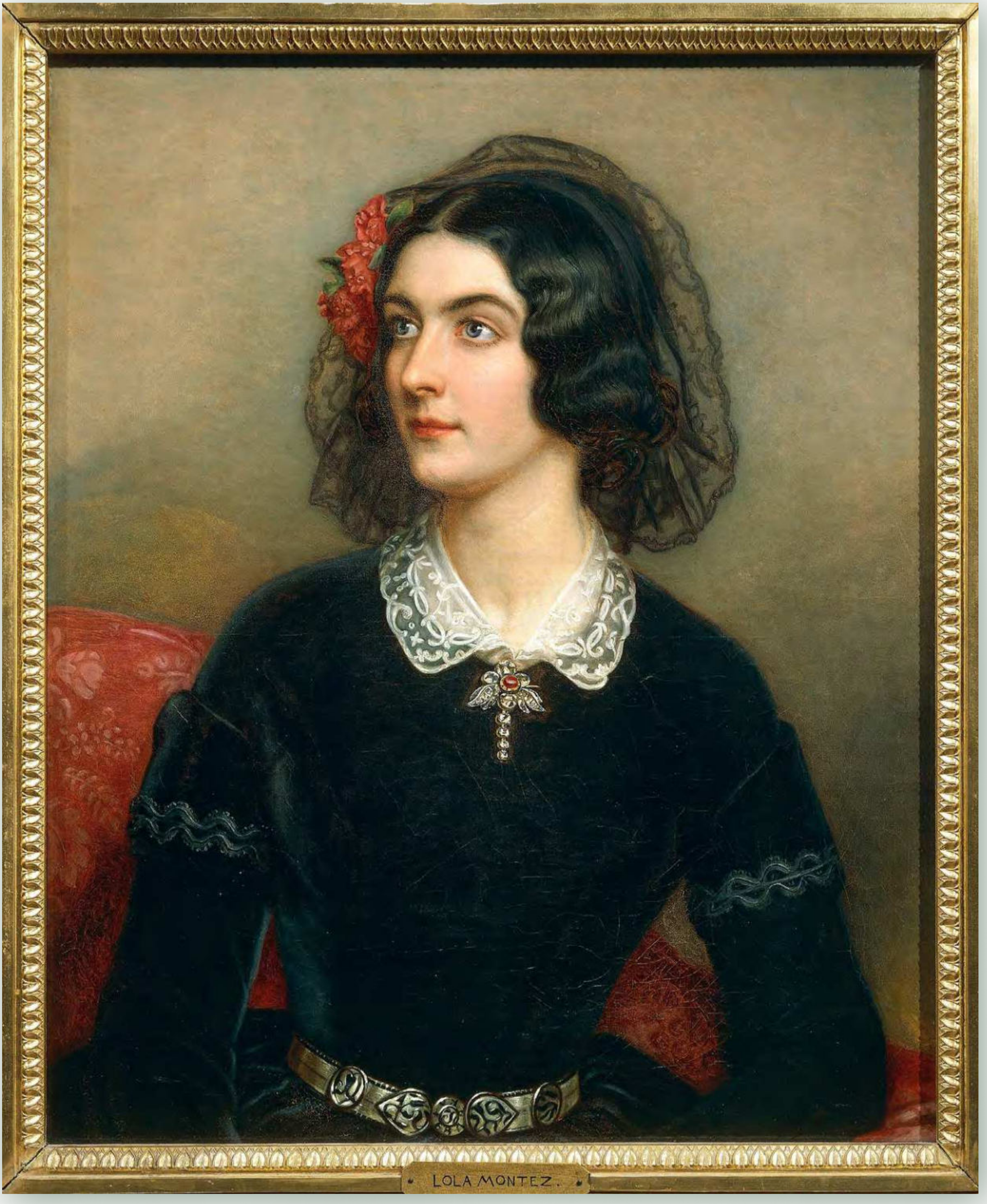
Lola briefly became engaged to journalist Alexandre Dujarier, but he was killed one fateful night in a duel against another journalist, Jean-Baptiste Rosemond de Beauvallon. Just hours before, Lola and Dujarier had argued over her attendance at a party to which Dujarier subsequently arrived drunk, offending Beauvallon and sparking the duel. At the inquest into his death, Lola reportedly told the court that she was a better shot than her slain fiancé – in fact, she was said to have been good with a pistol, a whip and even a dagger.

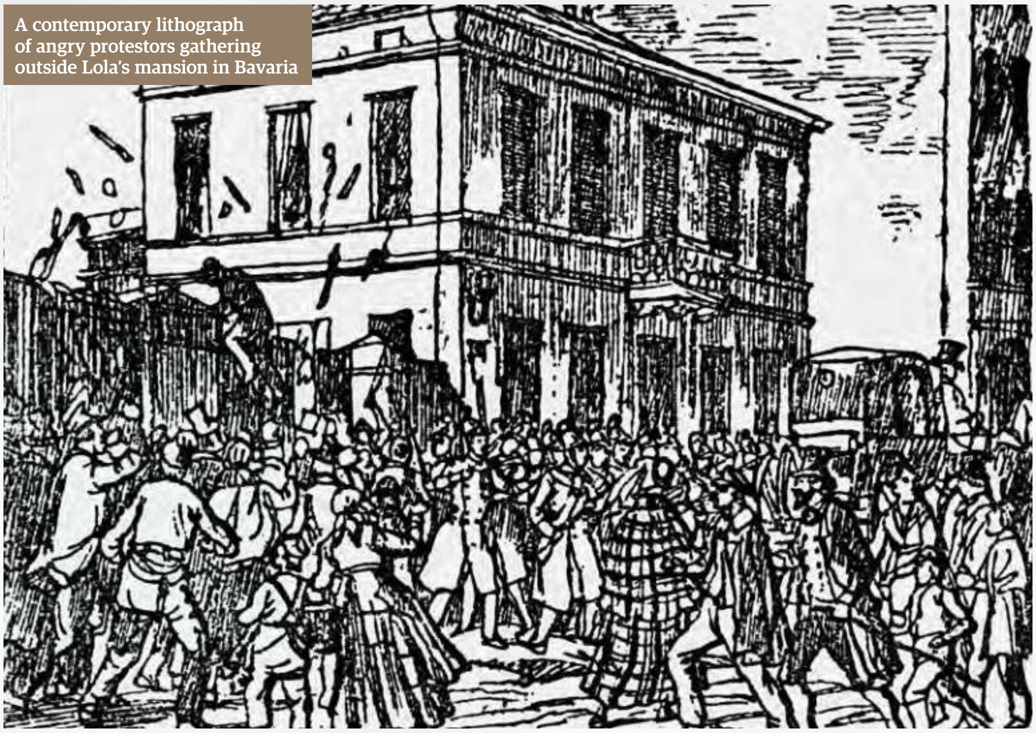
Moving to Munich, Bavaria, in October 1846, Lola wanted to perform at the Stage Theatre but her request was declined by the director, who knew that his deeply Catholic Bavarian audience would not accept her. Angered by the rejection, Lola brazenly went to Residenz Palace, King Ludwig's residence, and demanded an audience with him. Ludwig, who despite his marriage to Queen Therese was well known for his wandering eye, was instantly captivated by Lola – at 60 years old, he was almost four decades her senior. It's rumoured that when they first met he asked Lola if her bosom was real, and in response she tore off her clothing to prove that it was.

Infatuated with her, Ludwig arranged for Lola's debut at the Munich theatre as she wished, but it was a disaster as her provocative dancing outraged the Catholic audience – just as the director had predicted. Nonetheless, Ludwig's obsession with the Spanish dancer had only just begun and they spent increasing amounts of time together, with the king writing passionate letters to her every day.

The problem with this affair, however, was that it wasn't just Lola's beauty and sensuality that enchanted Ludwig. In The American Law Journal of 1848, it was reported that the king "became enamoured of her originality of character, her mental powers and those bold and novel political views which she fearlessly and frankly laid before him". It was clear that the dancer wielded a lot of influence over her lover and his willingness to discuss state affairs with her, a liberal, was seen as a threat by his conservative government.

Not only did Lola's political views clash with the conservative Bavarian court, but her arrogance and temper made her extremely unpopular across the country – it's even said that she would use


LOLA MONTEZ.


A contemporary lithograph of angry protestors gathering outside Lola's mansion in Bavaria

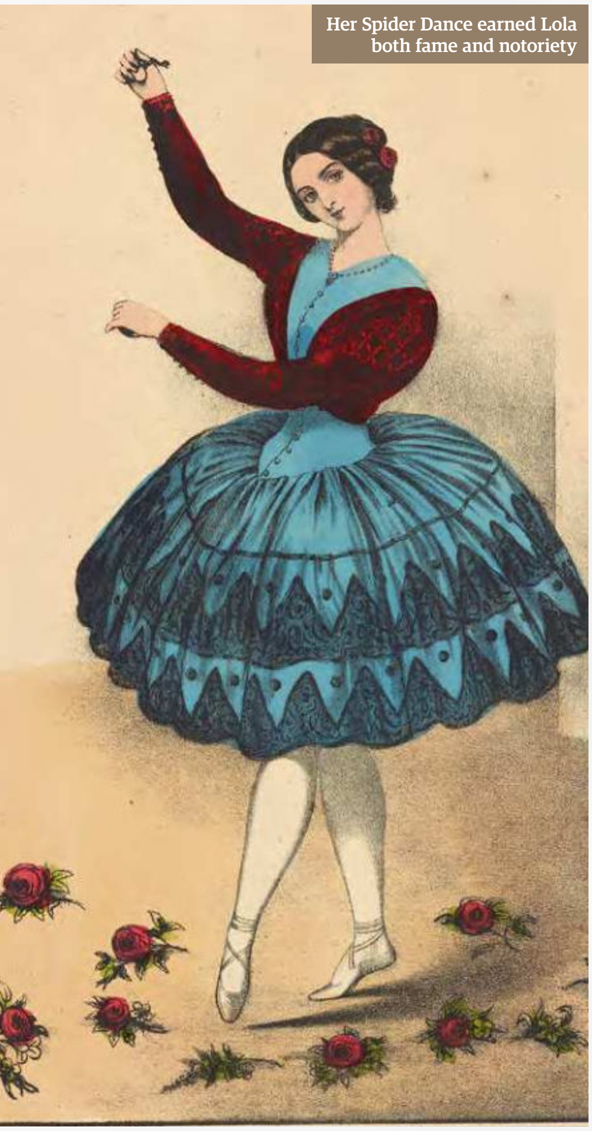
her whip on people in the streets. Lola was openly shunned in public as a disreputable woman and the growing disdain for her was blatant, although she did have some support from a group of university students who supported her liberalism.

Before long, Lola had earned herself the moniker 'the uncrowned queen of Bavaria' and Ludwig - who refused to hear any complaint against his mistress - gifted her with jewels, a monthly stipend and a mansion in Barerstraße. He even commissioned a portrait of her for his Gallery of Beauties. Meanwhile, when a story emerged in London's The Pictorial Times about Lola's true identity as an Irish divorcee, she denied it and sent letters to the major newspapers of London, Paris and parts of Germany with her 'true' biography. This included the following excerpt: "Sir, In consequence of the numerous reports circulated in various papers regarding myself and my family utterly void of foundation or truth… I was born at Seville in the year 1823. My father was a Spanish officer in the service of Don Carlos…"

It was completely fabricated, but Lola couldn't risk the king discovering her deception and she argued that the stories in the press were part of a Jesuit conspiracy against her. The tense situation surrounding her relationship with the king worsened when it became clear that Lola not only wanted to become a naturalised Bavarian citizen, but she also wanted to be elevated to the nobility.

In 1847 Ludwig announced his intention to name Lola as the Countess of Landsfeld, much to the horror of his government, who believed that the king's illicit relationship would destabilise the state. When Prime Minister Karl von Abel objected to Lola being made a countess, the king responded by firing him and his administration. Proceeding with the appointment, Ludwig also gave Lola an estate, feudal privileges and an annuity of 20,000 marks - roughly £5,000 - as well as making her a member of Queen Therese's personal order.

A blind eye had been turned to the king's infidelities over the years, but elevating his mistress to a noble rank was a step too far. When the professors of the university voiced their displeasure,


Her Spider Dance earned Lola both fame and notoriety

Lola poses for a daguerreotype taken in the 1850s

CONCERT
PATRICK

Ludwig promptly dismissed them in February 1848. The students, now finding their loyalties increasingly divided as they watched the plight of their teachers, decided to protest outside Lola's mansion. Approaching her window to view the protestors, Lola raised a glass of champagne to them while eating a box of chocolates, which she then chucked at the mob below. After this incident, she encouraged the king to shut the university altogether - an extremely ill-advised decision if there ever was one.

Infuriated, the students rioted in the streets and were quickly joined by other citizens who were sick of the king's unruly mistress. When Lola decided to venture out of the mansion, she was forced to take cover when she was attacked by the waiting protestors, with the king sending the police to rescue her - although, true to form, she managed to fire a few shots from her pistol over the demonstrators. Even the king's new government, which had been selected with Lola's help, resigned when he refused point-blank to renounce his mistress.

It wasn't until thousands of enraged protestors stood outside his palace that the king finally agreed to reopen the university and, reluctantly, give up his beloved Lola. She was whisked away to Switzerland in the middle of the night, but too much damage had been done to the king's reputation. The unrest in Bavaria coincided with the republican revolutions that were sweeping through Europe that year and soon a revolt had gripped the country. This unrest worsened when it was discovered that Lola had returned to Munich uninvited shortly after she had been expelled. Backed into a corner, Ludwig was forced to abdicate his throne in favour of his son, Maximilian, on 20 March 1848.

Despite losing his throne Ludwig remained hopelessly besotted with Lola and continued to support her financially - until he heard that she'd taken other lovers while abroad. In one of his final letters to her, he said, "It is not your enemies who have made me change my feelings for you but your conduct. You always look outside for motives for what happens to you, but you must look inside." Lola was furious about the end of their relationship and threatened to publish the intimate letters he'd written to her, although she never did.

Forced to start over, Lola travelled first to France and then to London in late-1848, where she quickly married George Trafford Heald, a young, wealthy English cavalry officer. But their newly wedded bliss soon encountered trouble when Heald's relatives uncovered Lola's true identity and had her charged with bigamy, since her first husband, Thomas James, was still alive. Lola and Heald fled Spain, but their tumultuous relationship came to an abrupt end when Heald allegedly drowned two years later.

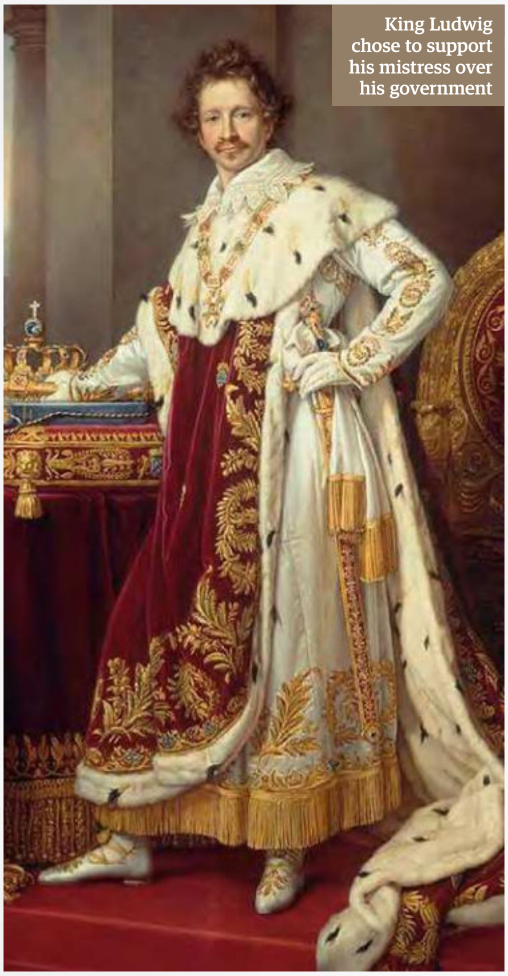
Sailing to New York in 1851, Lola started afresh in the United States, performing in Boston, Philadelphia, New Orleans and San Francisco over the next two years. She also embarked on an acting career and starred in a play written specifically for her, Lola Montez In Bavaria, which was a humorous but censored version of what had really occurred. Nonetheless, Lola proved a hit with audiences.

THE OTHER SIDE TO LOLA

Thanks to the lies she propagated herself, Lola's life is irrevocably twisted with myths and falsities. In this respect she was most certainly a con artist and she repeatedly attempted to defend her fake backstory as a native Spaniard, changing the year of her birth, birthplace and even who her father was, despite newspaper articles presenting evidence to the contrary.

However, in getting wrapped up about her colourful life, it's easy to forget that she was more than just a seductress with an ugly temper. After all, Lola mingled confidently in the artistic and literary circles of the day, charming some of the greatest minds in Europe with not only her physical allure but also her intellectual conversation. She was even photographed by Nadar, who captured portraits of some of the most prominent Parisians of the day. Lola was also a fluent linguist and gave dancing lessons to Lotta Crabtree, encouraging her to pursue a career in entertainment - the young girl would later become one of the most beloved entertainers of the 19th century.

Ultimately, Lola was a self-made woman who refused to be constrained by contemporary social and moral expectations of women, living life on her own terms and achieving fame in her own way. Perhaps her attitude is best shown through the dedication she wrote for her 1858 book The Arts Of Beauty; Or Secrets Of A Lady's Toilet: "To all men and women of every land, who are not afraid of themselves, who trust so much in their own souls that they dare to stand up in the might of their own individuality, to meet the tidal currents of the world, this book is respectfully dedicated, by The Author."


King Ludwig chose to support his mistress over his government

In July 1853 she married her third husband, newspaperman Patrick Hull, and they moved to Grass Valley, California - but once again her marriage quickly fell apart. According to one story, the doctor who was named by Hull as a co-respondent in the divorce suit was found shot dead shortly after. Remaining in Grass Valley for the next two years, Lola hired a young actor, Noel Follin, as her manager before embarking on a tour of Australia, where she found herself entertaining miners during the height of the gold rush.

After her first performance Lola received some positive reviews, with the critic for Bell's Life In Sydney And Sporting Reviewer stating, "Her entré was modest and elegant, and throughout the long performance she played with a mingled fervour, grace, playfulness and pathos that fully gained the favour of all." However, the criticisms quickly returned when she performed her Spider Dance at the Theatre Royal, Melbourne, in September 1855, lifting her skirts so high that the audience could see that she had no underwear on. A critic at The Argus newspaper described her performance as "utterly subversive to all ideas of public morality."

Her notoriety deepened in February 1856 when she attacked the editor of The Ballarat Times, Henry Seekamp, with her whip after reading a bad review of her performance. He retaliated and sued her for assault, while she sued him for slander. Both cases failed but Lola's solicitor then successfully sued him for libel, and he eventually sold the newspaper and left. Just two months later, she was asked to perform an encore after her Spider Dance at Castlemaine in front of 400 miners, but she aggravated the audience when she insulted them after enduring some mild heckling.

Lola returned to the United States that May but on the way, Follin was mysteriously lost overboard - just another unexplained death associated with her. After failing in her attempts to revive her career, Lola started delivering moral lectures written by Reverend Charles Chauncey Burr. She also published several texts including her autobiography, which unsurprisingly painted her in a favourable light. By 1860 syphilis had ravaged her body, and as her health declined it was said she repented the transgressions of her life. When she died aged 39 on 17 January 1861, the Sacramento Daily Union wrote that she'd spent her last days taking "refuge in the consolation of the Christian faith". Her headstone bore the name 'Mrs Eliza Gilbert'.

Becoming one of the most famous women of the 19th century, Lola was the embodiment of a 'bad woman' who young Victorian girls were warned never aspire to. Throughout her life, Lola had managed to scandalise and delight audiences around the world, contribute to the fall of a king and she even found time to peddle so many myths about herself, that it's impossible to know the whole truth about her. As a result, Lola Montex remains just as fascinating and mystifying in death as she was in life.

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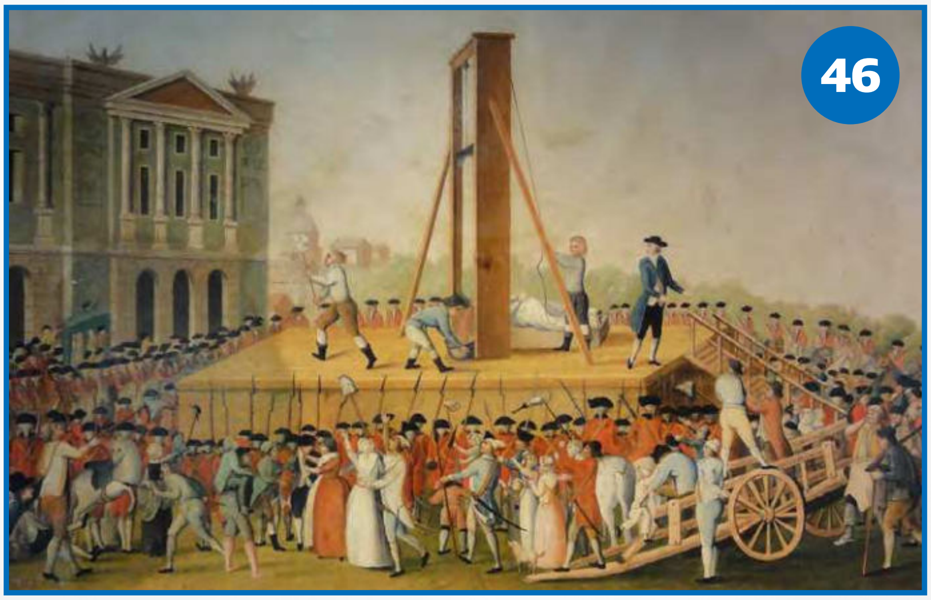
Allegations



40 **Scandals in the Ancient World**
The schemes, murders and affairs that caused shockwaves in antiquity

46 **The Diamond Necklace Affair**
Learn about the elaborate scam that ruined the reputation of Marie Antoinette

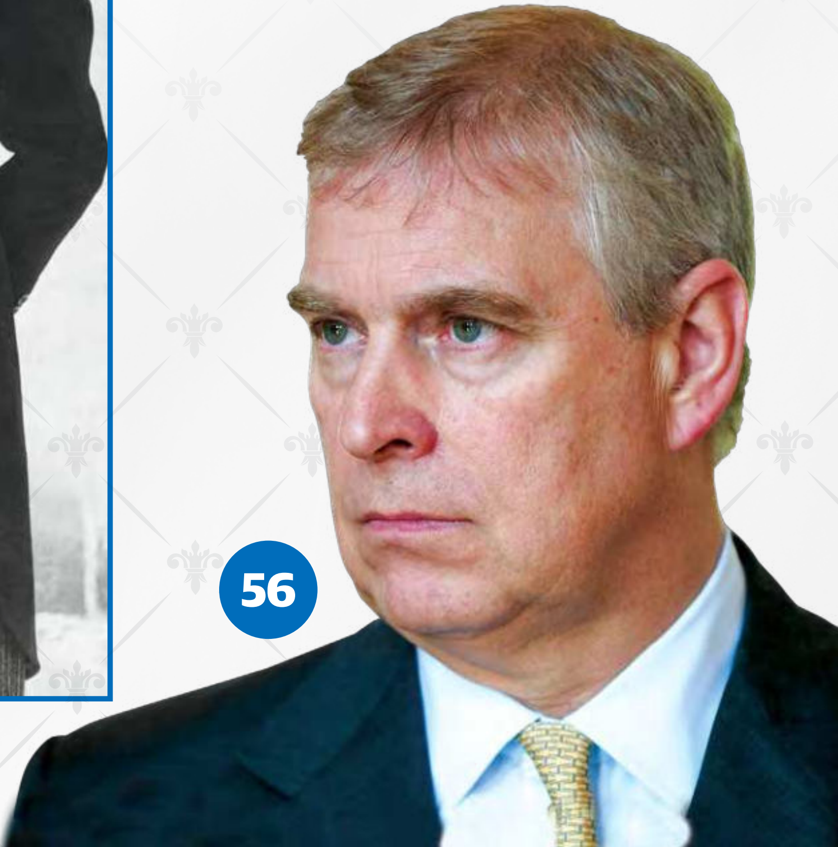
50 **The Family Shame**
Edward VIII ascended the throne to great fanfare but felt compelled to give it up within a year, dying a friendless exile with a ruined reputation

56 **The Allegations Against Andrew**
Inside the scandal that has embroiled the Duke of York

60 **The Rise and Fall of Juan Carlos**
The financial scandals that sent the popular king of Spain into ignominious exile

64 **The Sussexes Speak Out**
All you need to know about the Duke and Duchess' explosive interview with Oprah Winfrey

> "But the queen had been warned to keep Jeanne at a distance; something just didn't seem right about her"



ROYAL SCANDALS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

Inside the warped world of schemes, murders and affairs that caused shock waves in antiquity

Written by **Katharine Marsh**

Royal scandals are nothing new - since the beginning of recorded history, society's elites have been embroiled in torrid affairs, caught up in corruption and done anything they could to gain and stay in power. And in antiquity, things were at times a little more… wild.

In a world where blood sports were major public events, it seems like no one would bat an eye to things like murder and prostitution, but emperors and kings knew how to take things just a bit too far. Family ties often didn't mean much, either. Read on to find out about an emperor who banished his own daughter from the empire, an empress who blinded her son in a desperate bid to keep her crown, and a king who was so proud of his wife's beauty that he wanted to show her off.

EMPEROR EXILES HIS DAUGHTER FOR ADULTERY

Being in the imperial family was no guarantee of safety, as Julia the Elder found out

2 BCE

Being the daughter of Rome's first emperor was no guarantee of safety - and that was something that Julia the Elder found out the hard way. Her first two marriages, to Marcus Marcellus and Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, had both ended with the men's deaths, so in 12 BCE Julia was forced into a union with her step-brother, Tiberius, the son of Augustus' wife Livia from her first marriage.

It wasn't the happiest of partnerships and rumours swirled around Rome of Julia finding satisfaction and affection elsewhere. When their infant son sadly died in 6 BCE, Tiberius left the city in a voluntary exile, leaving his wife behind. With no husband to hold her back, Julia's appetite became more voracious as her affairs became less secretive. Another problem was Julia's choice of partners. One was Iullus Antonius, the son of the late Mark Antony, her father's former rival for the throne.

A heavy part of Augustus' image to his people and his policies was his perfect family. His wife was loyal and womanly in her pursuits - having a married daughter who was accused of sleeping with half of Rome was a major issue. His first attempt to curb Julia's urges was to threaten her with death, but he ended up exiling her from the city of Rome. She was sent first to Pandataria, an island off Campania, in 2 BCE. Six years later, she was moved to Rhegium, where she remained. When Tiberius, her cuckolded husband, came to the throne, he stopped her allowance. Julia, the daughter and wife of emperors, would die of malnutrition.

Julia the Elder's discretions would leave her to die alone and disgraced

Senenmut holds a young Princess Nefurure, who some incorrectly theorised was his daughter

EGYPTIAN PHARAOH'S SECRET COMMONER LOVER?

Hatshepsut was thought to be having a love affair with her daughter's tutor

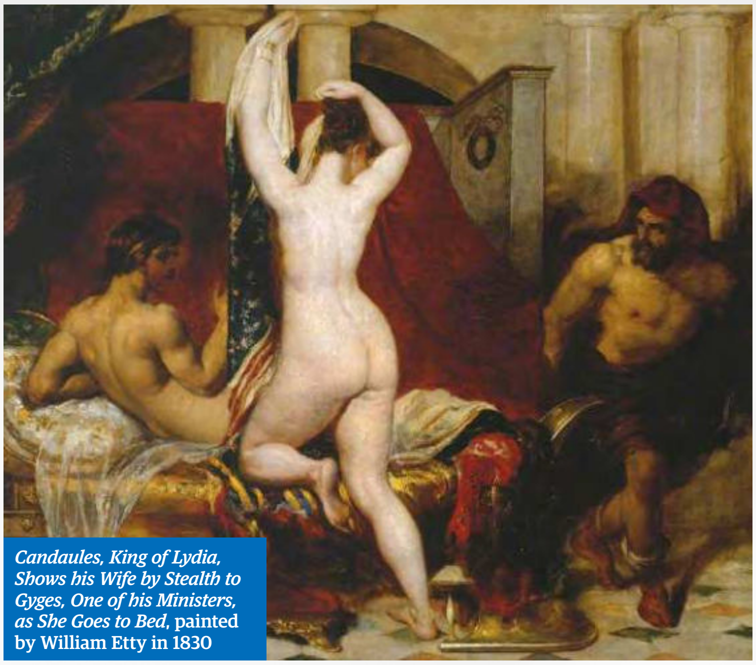
1479-1458 BCE

Hatshepsut has rightfully earned her place in history. One of Egypt's few female pharaohs, she has captured the interest of many - and perhaps also one of her officials.

Senenmut was a commoner who found greatness in Ancient Egypt. Out of all his siblings - two sisters and four brothers, including him - he was the only one to rise through the ranks to high office. It's unclear how Senenmut and Hatshepsut met, but it was likely when Senenmut was appointed tutor and steward of princess Neferure, Hatshepsut's daughter.

Hatshepsut found herself in possession of the throne when her husband, Tuthmosis II, died. As her power skyrocketed when she acted as regent for her son, Tuthmosis III, Senenmut found himself with more power, too. The tutor became an architect, credited with the design of Djeser-Djeseru, the mortuary temple of Hatshepsut, although no firm evidence exists that he was actually the designer.

Perhaps it was for this reason that rumours spread about an affair between the pair. What has fuelled speculation throughout the centuries are the depictions of Senenmut in so many of Hatshepsut's monuments. When an image of him adoring his pharaoh was found inscribed behind a door jamb in Djeser-Djeseru, its private nature was thought to show the true depth of their personal relationship.



Candaules, King of Lydia, Shows his Wife by Stealth to Gyges, One of his Ministers, as She Goes to Bed, painted by William Etty in 1830

THE KING WHO LOVED HIS WIFE FOR HER BEAUTY

King Candaules was more than happy to show off his wife's good looks

7TH CENTURY BCE

King Candaules of Lydia loved his wife, or at the very least, how she looked. Candaules believed his wife – whose name is lost to history – to be the most beautiful woman in the world and he would boast about it to everyone.

On Candaules' staff was a man called Gyges. Depending on which source you read, Gyges was a shepherd who found a ring that made him invisible and used it to kill Candaules and seduce his wife, or he was an army officer already suspected of treachery.

Early take on *The Lord of the Rings* and corruption aside, it's perhaps Herodotus' take that is arguably more like what happened. Candaules wanted to show his wife off to Gyges so he effectively ordered him to sneakily watch his wife changing. Of course, no one had factored in what the woman would think of all of this. As it happened, Gyges was caught by Candaules' wife and, understandably, she was outraged. Her response was one of anger and she forced Gyges on pain of death to kill her husband.

Regardless of the truth, Gyges did come to the Lydian throne as the first of the Mermnad dynasty after assassinating king Candaules. And according to many sources, Candaules' wife was right by his side on the throne.

> "Candaules wanted to show his wife off to Gyges so he effectively ordered him to sneakily watch his wife changing"

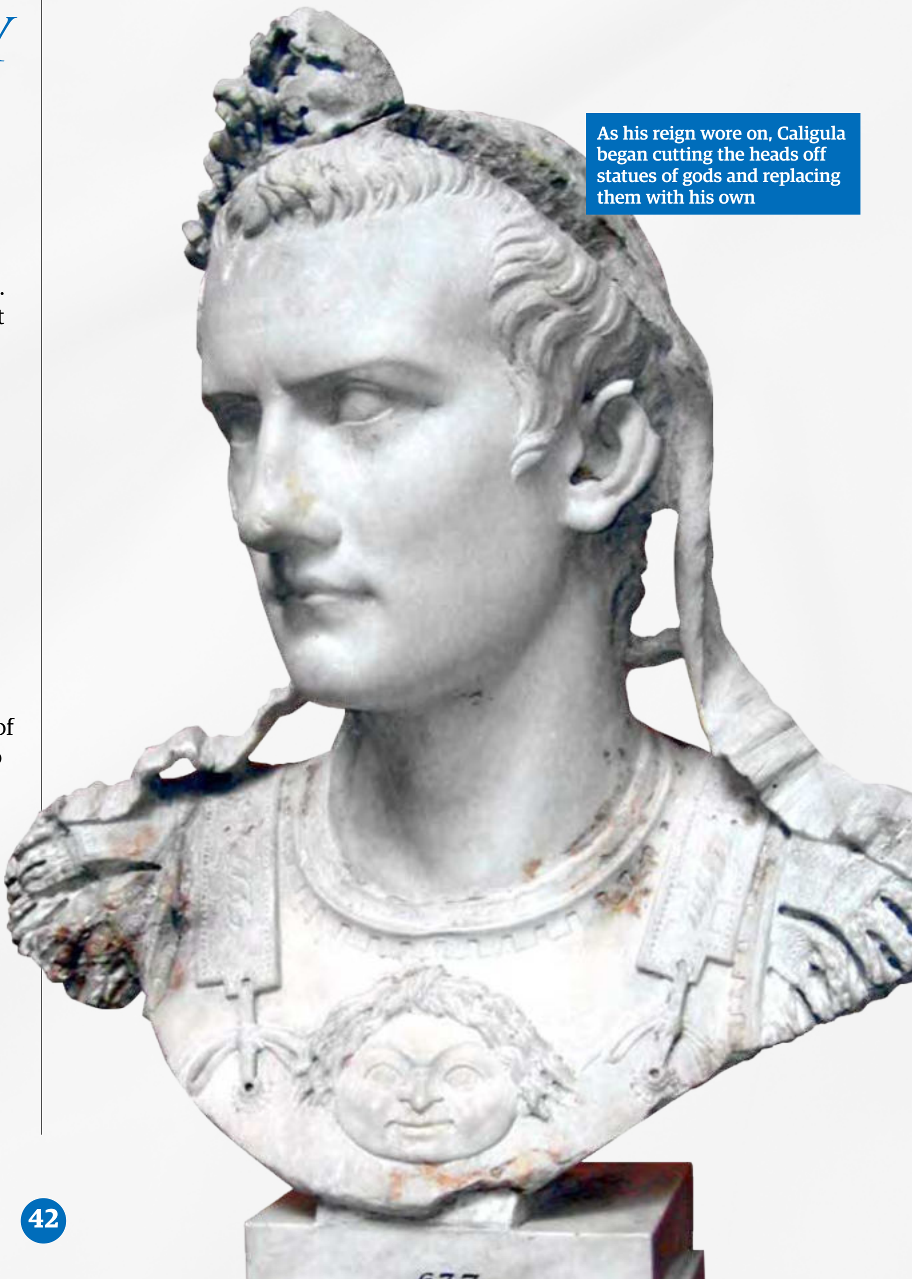
AN INCESTOUS ROMAN EMPEROR?

What Caligula got up to behind closed doors

40 BCE

Caligula is a name that has gone down in history for its notoriety. Meaning 'little boot' – it was a nickname given to him as a child – Caligula's reign was one of terror, scandal and insanity. He spent his entire treasury in a matter of years and used extortion to finance his lifestyle, he was (incorrectly) accused of trying to make a horse his consul, and ordered soldiers to collect seashells in northern Gaul, which he then called the spoils of the conquered ocean – he was yet to actually cross the English Channel at that point.

One of his biggest scandals, though, involved religion. According to the Romans, Judaea was a trouble spot. The pesky natives there refused to give up their religion and worship the pagan gods. Caligula didn't care about what they wanted. His plan? To erect a colossal statue of himself in the Temple of Jerusalem, one of the holiest Jewish sites. It didn't go down well, and eventually, he was persuaded to scrap the project by Herod Agrippa. It was the beginning of the end for Caligula; he was assassinated by his own bodyguards less than a year later.



As his reign wore on, Caligula began cutting the heads off statues of gods and replacing them with his own

The State of Qin
c. 260 BCE
Yan
Dai
Ji
Zhao
Gulf of Ji
Qi
Handan
Linzi
Yellow River
Ye
Wei
Wei
Anyi
Luoyang
Daliang
Yong
Wei River
Qin
Xianyang
Han
Yangzhai
Chen
Nanzheng
Han River
Danyang
Cai
Huai River
Shouchun
Chu
Ba
Ying
Yangtze River
100
200
300
400

There are no surviving images of Queen Zhao, but this is a map of the Chinese Qin state during her lifetime

THE TRUE STORY OF A CHINESE EMPEROR'S MOTHER'S LOVER

Meet Queen Zhao's fake eunuch

3RD CENTURY BCE

Qin Shi Huang is known as the first emperor of all of China, but his mother, Queen Zhao, is remembered for something rather more sordid. Zhao was conducting an affair with one of the ministers, Lü Buwei, but it wasn't enough. Lü Buwei found it difficult to discreetly visit his queen, and Zhao needed more to be satisfied.

Together, they hatched a plan. They tracked down Lao Ai, who was known around town for one thing: he was particularly well-endowed. So well-endowed, in fact, that his party trick was apparently putting a wheel on his manhood like an axle. Lao Ai agreed to become Zhao's lover, but to get him close enough to the queen, there was one more step in the plot: a faked castration. Lü Buwei faked the procedure and plucked out Lao Ai's hair and beard, and Lao Ai was introduced to court as a eunuch. He was sent to serve the queen, and everyone was satisfied.

But all good things must come to an end, and the plot was eventually uncovered. Lao Ai, and three generations of his family, were executed, while Lü Buwei and Zhao were banished.

ELAGABALUS: ONE OF ROME'S MOST UNHINGED EMPERORS

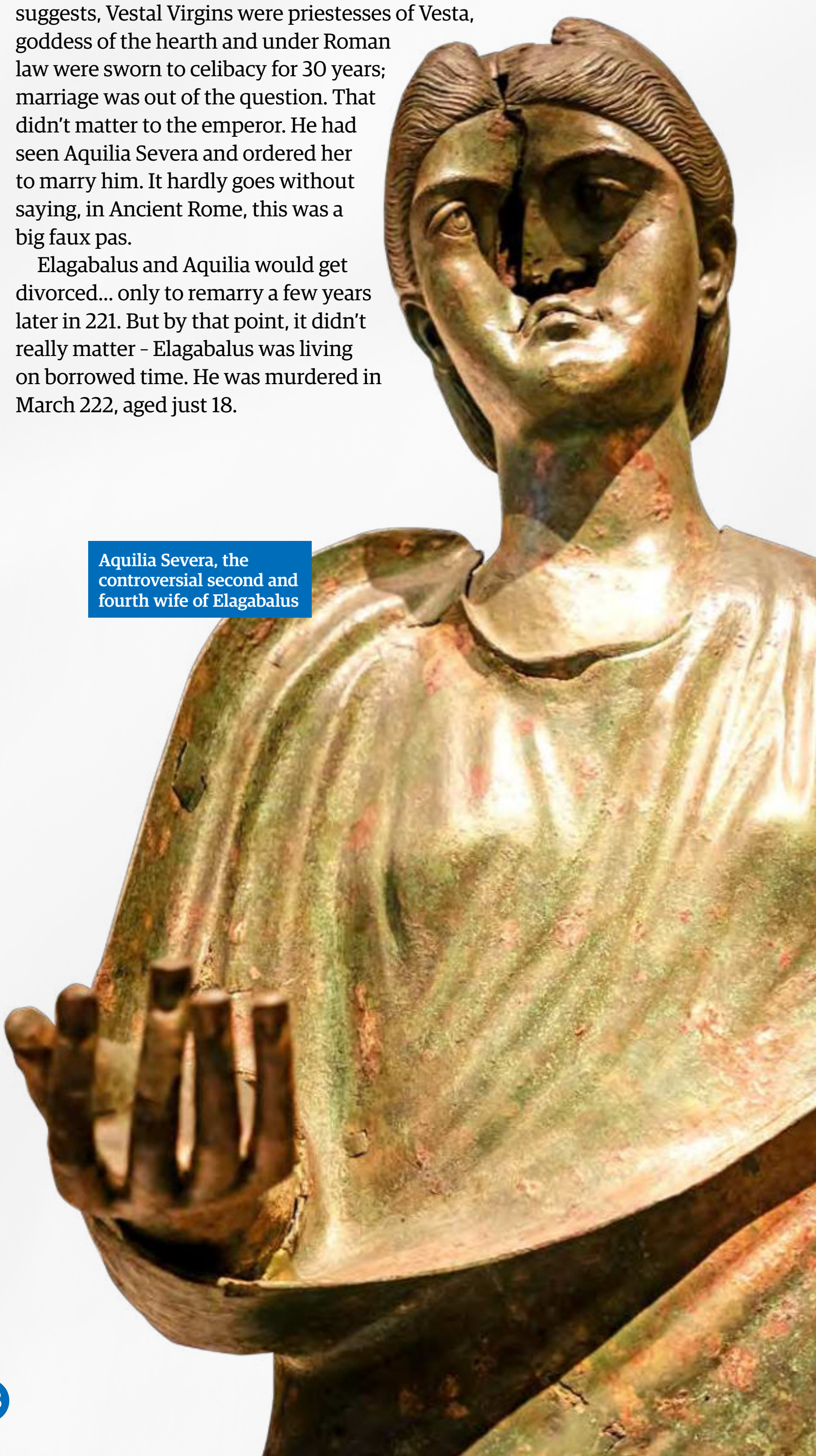
A teenager who was never told 'no'

220 CE

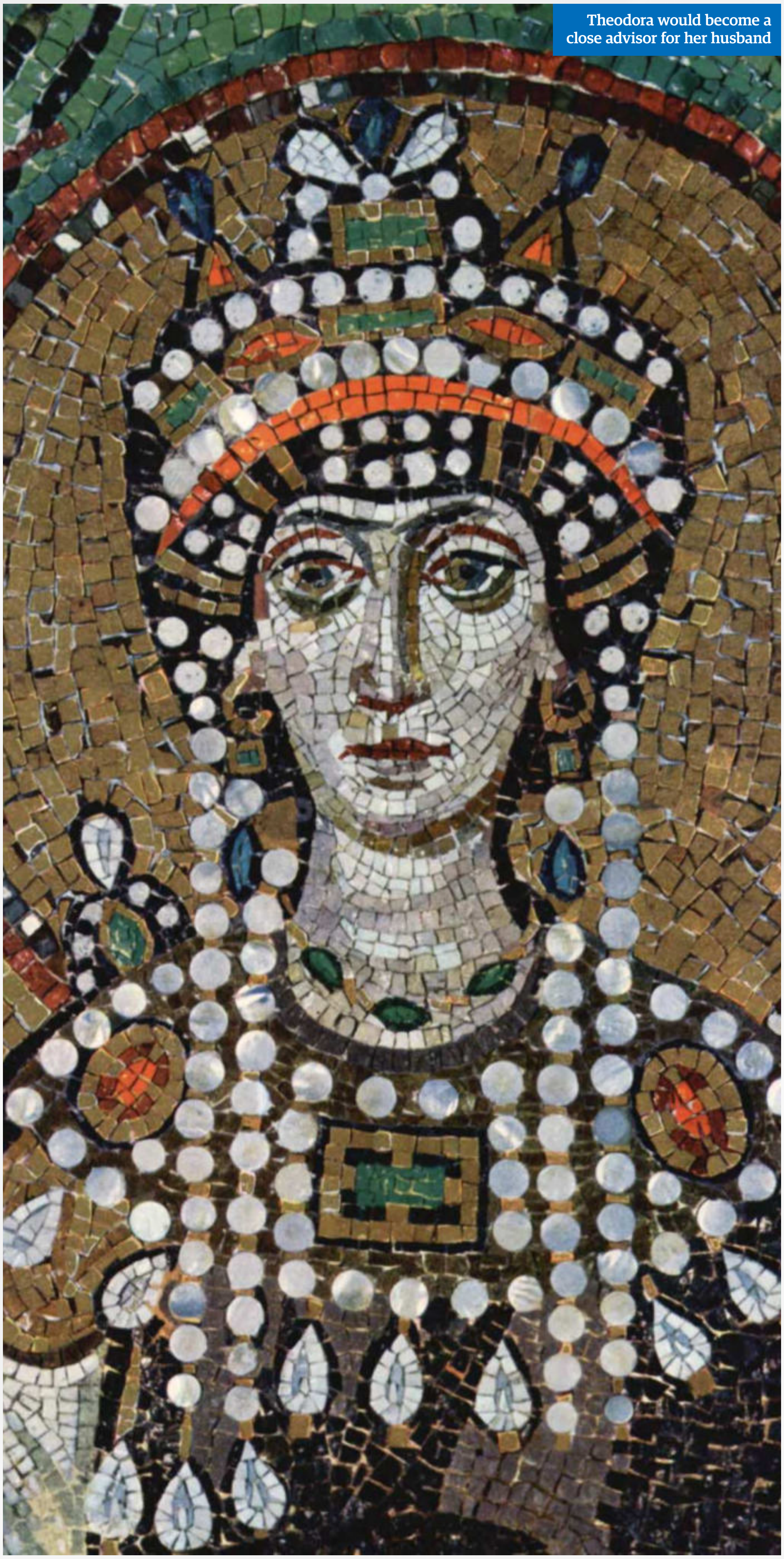
It's hard to know where to start when it comes to Elagabalus' scandals. He executed generals, slept around and paraded around like a god. But one of his earlier acts is arguably the most scandalous.

Elagabalus' first wife, Julia Cornelia Paula, was in for a nasty surprise when she found herself divorced… in favour of a Vestal Virgin. As the name suggests, Vestal Virgins were priestesses of Vesta, goddess of the hearth and under Roman law were sworn to celibacy for 30 years; marriage was out of the question. That didn't matter to the emperor. He had seen Aquilia Severa and ordered her to marry him. It hardly goes without saying, in Ancient Rome, this was a big faux pas.

Elagabalus and Aquilia would get divorced… only to remarry a few years later in 221. But by that point, it didn't really matter – Elagabalus was living on borrowed time. He was murdered in March 222, aged just 18.



Aquilia Severa, the controversial second and fourth wife of Elagabalus



Theodora would become a close advisor for her husband

JUSTINIAN MARRIES PROSTITUTE

The mistress who became a powerful empress

527 CE

Theodora has become a name synonymous with power and respect. She was one of the most influential women in Byzantine history as she stood by Justinian's side to run the Eastern Roman Empire. But her beginnings were less than 'proper' in the eyes of society at the time.

Theodora's father was a bear keeper at the Hippodrome in Constantinople, according to Procopius of Caesarea. And he went on to say what Theodora got up to – while still very much in her youth, she became an actress and a prostitute. She apparently even gave birth to at least one child outside of marriage. Procopius called her "Theodora-from-the-Brothel", and 'actress' wasn't an occupation that was highly revered in Constantinople. It was thought of as being similar to being a courtesan.

When Justinian first met his future wife, he was attracted to her beauty and intelligence – but first, he would make her his mistress. Before that, she had been mistress to Hecebolus, governor of modern-day Libya. When they ended their relationship, she converted to Monophysitism, an early branch of Christianity that found itself under attack by the Roman state. She was hardly a popular choice for the wife of a Roman emperor.

> "'Actress' wasn't an occupation that was highly revered in Constantinople. It was thought of as being similar to being a courtesan"

ROMAN WIFE PLOTS AGAINST HER HUSBAND… THE EMPEROR

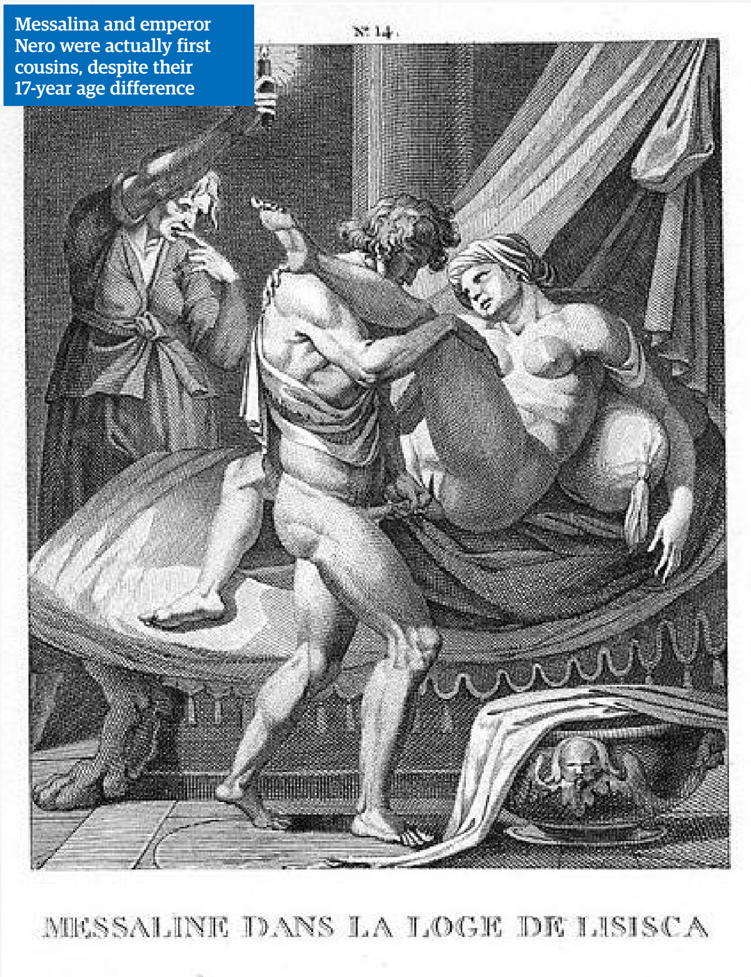
Messalina attracted scandal wherever she went

48 CE

When it came to affairs, Messalina was apparently something of an expert. Some gossipers put her body count at more than 150, while others claimed she worked as a prostitute at a brothel during the night before returning home to her husband in the morning. Who was her husband? Emperor Claudius. The rumours probably did little to help Messalina's fate.

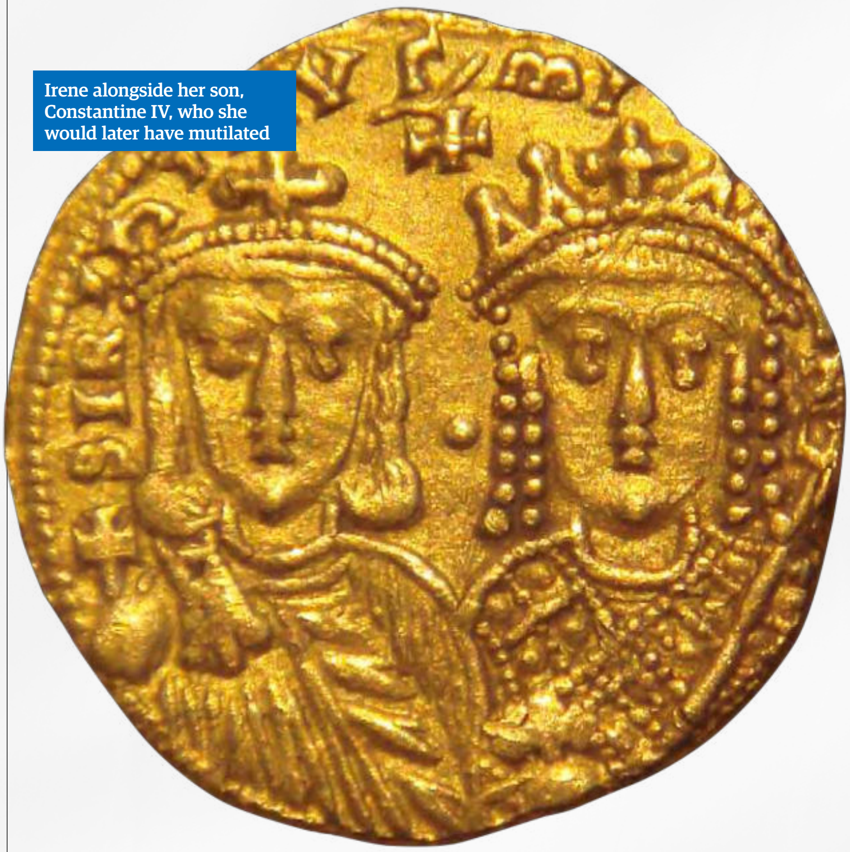
In fact, it was a relationship with one of her lovers that ultimately got Messalina in trouble. Gaius Silius was a senator - and Messalina wanted to marry him. It didn't matter that she was married to Claudius, because he was out of town; the wedding went ahead anyway, with an extravagant reception. But Messalina had made a lot of enemies, and they were clamouring to be the one to tell Claudius what his wife had done.

Claudius was almost ready to let the whole thing go, but it was too big a scandal. With advisors whispering in his ear, it became obvious that the line had to be drawn somewhere with Messalina's behaviour. She was forced to take her own life and a damnatio memoriae was ordered, removing any traces of her existence from public and private places.



Messalina and emperor Nero were actually first cousins, despite their 17-year age difference

MESSALINE DANS LA LOGE DE LISISCA



Irene alongside her son, Constantine IV, who she would later have mutilated

MAIMING YOUR WAY TO THE THRONE

Irene of Athens had a unique way of taking control

797 CE

Sometimes, when someone is given a taste of power, they'll do everything they can to hold onto it. Irene of Athens was the consort of the Byzantine emperor Leo IV and managed to overthrow a conspiracy that wanted to put Leo's half-brother on the throne after his death. Instead, her son, Constantine IV, came to the throne although he was a child. As a result, she served as regent with the expectation that she would stand aside when Constantine came of age.

That didn't happen. As Constantine got older, Irene got more worried. The day was fast approaching when she would fade into irrelevance, something that her rivals were already trying to make happen, and that couldn't happen. Her response was to go after her son. She knew Constantine would try to get away from her, so she arranged for his capture as soon as he attempted to escape. Once he was in her custody, she ordered his eyes to be gouged out. It was a gruesome punishment for simply growing up.

Constantine died from his treatment 17 days later, and Irene was in the clear. She proclaimed herself empress, with no need for a man to rule alongside her. The pope of the time wasn't exactly pleased - Leo III proclaimed Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor in her place, although Irene continued to rule. Her peace wouldn't last, though, as she was overthrown five years later in 802, and died in exile on the island of Lesbos.

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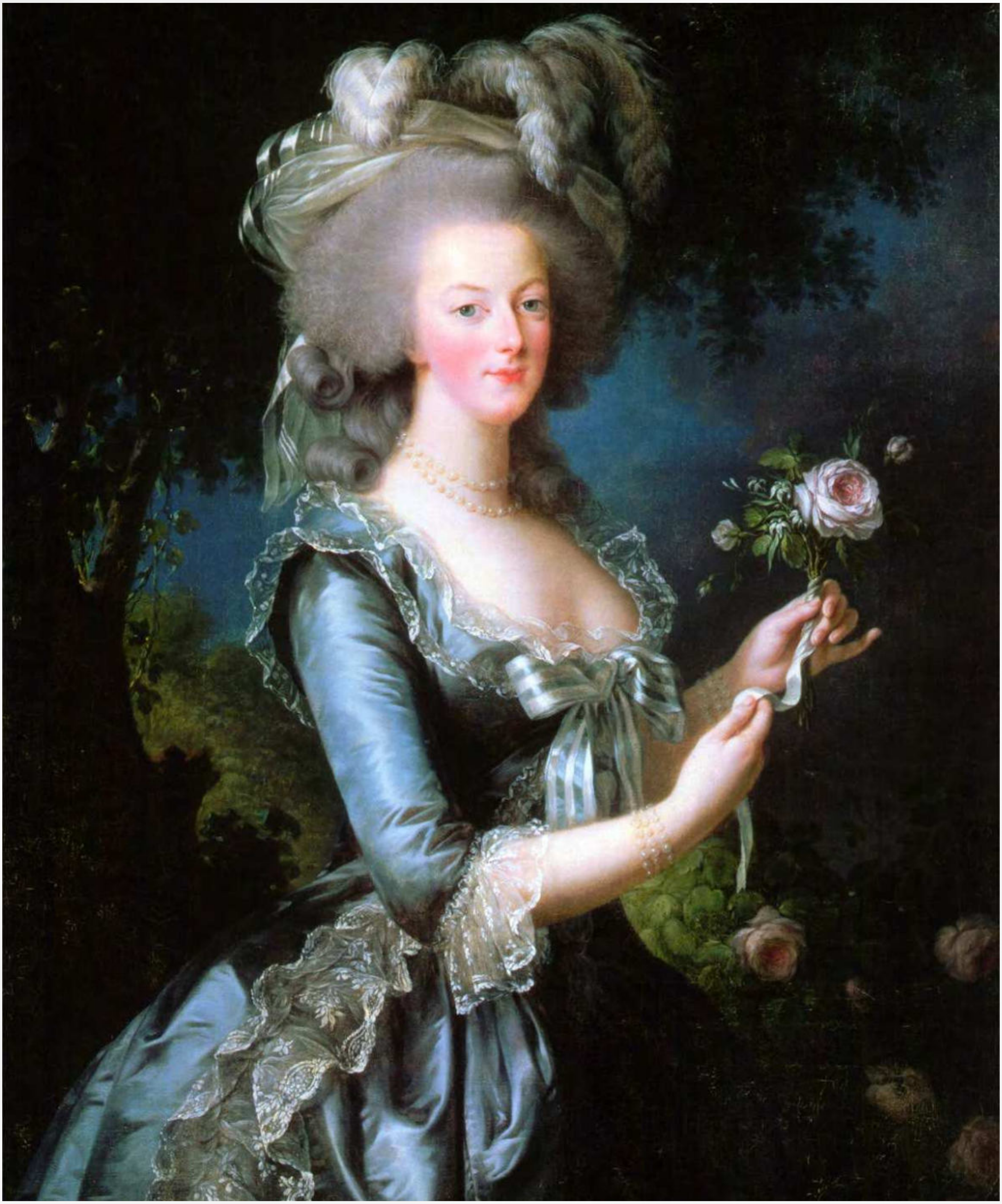


THE DIAMOND NECKLACE AFFAIR

Uncover an elaborate scam involving Marie Antoinette - but the queen had no idea

Written by **Scott Reeves**

The crowd outside the Palace of Versailles council chamber rippled with excitement. They knew something extraordinary was going on inside. Cardinal de Rohan, who was about to celebrate Mass for the royal family to mark the Assumption of the Virgin, had been unexpectedly escorted to the king's apartment by a couple of soldiers. Who was else was inside and what were they saying?

Suddenly the door opened and the pale cardinal walked out. With him was the king's chief minister, who turned to the nearest guard and said loudly, for all to hear, "The king orders you, monsieur, to arrest the cardinal."

The stunning detention of Rohan in August 1785 was the moment the Affair of the Diamond Necklace burst into the public domain. The scandal ruined the reputation of Rohan and discredited Marie Antoinette, but both were largely innocent victims of a scammer who burrowed her way into the court with breathtaking boldness.

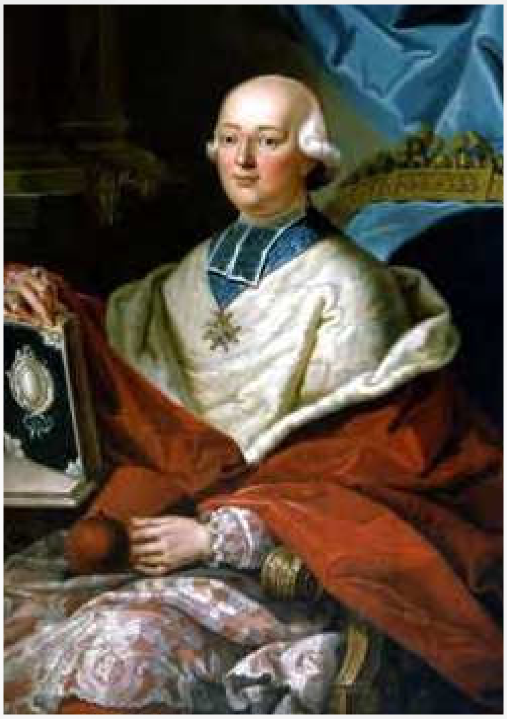
The charlatan at the centre of the affair was Jeanne de La Motte. Despite descending from an illegitimate son of King Henry II, Jeanne was born into an impoverished family and was forced to beg on the streets. Her family successfully petitioned the royal family for a small pension before Jeanne married Nicolas de La Motte, whose claim to nobility was even more doubtful than her own, but that didn't stop the two newlyweds assuming the titles of Comte and Comtesse de La Motte Valois.

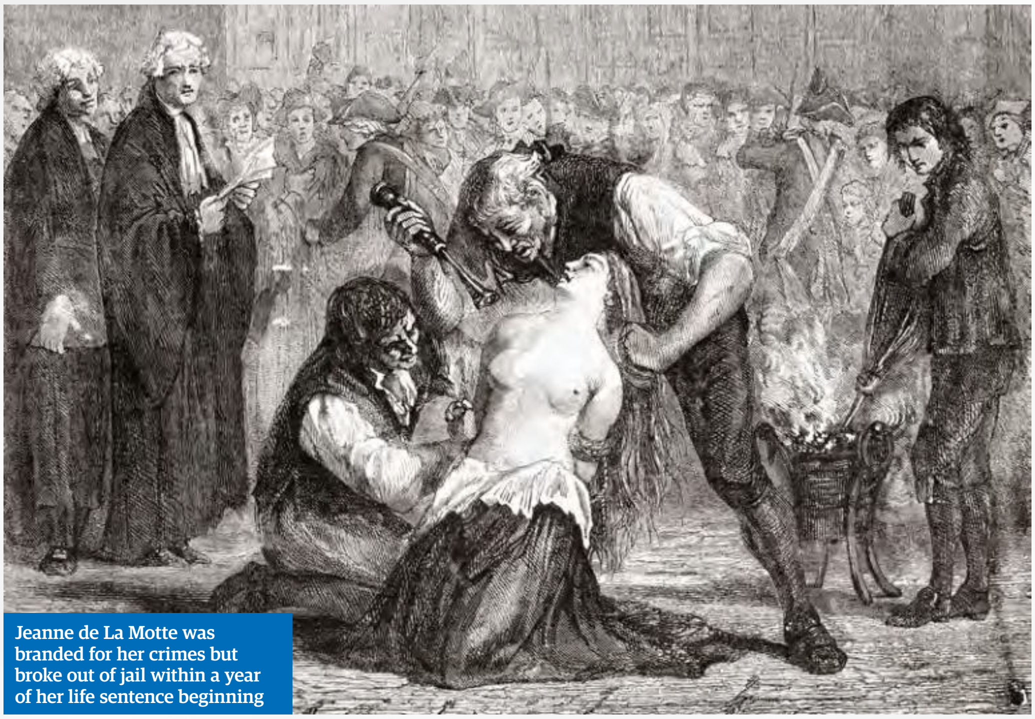
Yet Jeanne aspired to greater things. She hoped to befriend Marie Antoinette in the hope that her pension would be increased, even staging a dramatic faux faint as the queen walked past her at Versailles. But the queen had been warned to keep Jeanne at a distance; something just didn't seem right about her.

Jeanne already had another trick up her sleeve. For the past couple of years she had been sharing a bed with Cardinal de Rohan, the Grand Almoner of France - effectively the most important member of the Church at court. Yet Rohan was similarly disillusioned with his lot in life. He had served as an ambassador in Vienna from 1772, but Empress Maria Theresa was turned off by the lavish and venal lifestyle enjoyed by a man of the Church. Rohan unwisely spread rumours that Maria Theresa's daughter Marie Antoinette, then married to the dauphin, was having an affair in the French court and wrote a letter criticising the empress that reached the eyes of Marie Antoinette. When Louis XV died in 1774, Rohan was recalled and received a frosty reception from the new King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette.

Rohan wanted to win back royal approval and Jeanne knew it. She told Rohan an elaborate tale of the friendship she had with the queen. That time when Jeanne fainted in front of Marie

> "But the queen had been warned to keep Jeanne at a distance; something just didn't seem right about her"





Jeanne de La Motte was branded for her crimes but broke out of jail within a year of her life sentence beginning

Antoinette, who swished past with barely a second look? Jeanne confided that the queen had later invited Jeanne to her apartments and plied her with money. She convinced Rohan that she had discussed him with the queen and offered to carry his letters to her. Marie Antoinette's replies - faked by another of Jeanne's lovers, Rétaux de Villette - even hinted that the queen had romantic feelings for Rohan.

During an August night in 1784, Jeanne arranged for Rohan to meet secretly with the queen in the gardens of the Palace of Versailles. He knelt at her feet; she gave him a rose and coyly hid her face behind a fan while saying, "You may believe that the past will be forgotten." Jeanne soon pulled Marie Antoinette away, claiming there were too many people around. Only it wasn't actually Marie Antoinette. It was a prostitute, Nicole Le Guay, whose Jeanne had hired for the evening and who was completely baffled.

Rohan had been completely deceived by a supreme confidence trickster. He either didn't notice or chose to ignore the fact that the queen signed her letters 'Marie Antoinette de France' rather than the usual 'Marie Antoinette'. He happily gave money to Jeanne, having been convinced by the correspondence that it was going to the queen's charitable endeavours.

Jeanne de La Motte totally hoodwinked Rohan in a two-year scam that saw him supposedly exchange letters with the queen

The ploy reached new heights when Jeanne discovered that Charles Auguste Boehmer and Paul Bassange were trying to sell an exceptional piece of jewellery. They had designed a huge diamond-encrusted necklace for Louis XV's favoured mistress, Madame du Barry, on the orders of the king. However, when Louis died suddenly from smallpox, they were left holding an expensive and as-yet unpaid-for necklace.

"The suspects were held in the notorious Bastille prior to their trials"

They tried to sell it to Marie Antoinette, but she declined on more than one occasion. She didn't want a piece of jewellery made for a mistress and declared, "We have more need of seventy-fours [warships] than of necklaces." Boehmer and Bassange proffered it around Europe, but the asking price of 2 million livres (the equivalent of over £10 million in 2022) was simply too high.

Jeanne delivered one of her fake letters to Rohan indicating that Marie Antoinette did want the necklace but felt unable to buy it given her husband's reluctance and France's dwindling economy. Would Rohan be able to lend her the money and act as a secret intermediary?

Of course he would. Rohan met with the jewellers and negotiated to pay 1.6 million livres in four instalments. Boehmer and Bassange were told the necklace was being purchased by Marie Antoinette but that they must keep it a secret. Rohan carried the jewellery to Versailles and handed it over to a supposed member of the queen's household in the company of Jeanne. However, it didn't reach Marie Antoinette; it was broken up and its 17 individual diamonds were hawked across Europe by Jeanne's husband, La Motte, and her lover, Villette.

Rohan, Boehmer and Bassange waited with bated breath for the queen to wear the stunning jewels at court. As each day passed with no sign of the diamond necklace, they began to worry. Jeanne reassured them that Marie Antoinette simply hadn't found the right time to tell her husband about the extravagant purchase.

Boehmer and Bassange reluctantly agreed to drop the price a further 200,000 livres and wrote a fawning letter to the queen thanking her for her purchase. A puzzled Marie Antoinette burned the letter and Boehmer was told to stay away from court - had the queen not made clear she did not want any jewellery from him?

The date of the first instalment came and went. Boehmer tried again to speak to the queen but was turned away. Eventually the penny started to drop. Marie Antoinette received Boehmer, who pleaded that she pay for the necklace she had bought via Rohan else he faced bankruptcy. The queen realised something fishy was afoot. It was time to inform the king.

Rohan's sudden arrest was followed by the detention of Jeanne, forger Villette, prostitute

Le Guay and Count Cagliostro, an acquaintance of Rohan who Jeanne accused of orchestrating the entire scam. Nicolas de La Motte was safely overseas and avoided arrest. He apparently avoided an assassination attempt in London - although considering the source that tells us about the attack came from Jeanne's pen, only a fool would take what she wrote without a large pinch of salt.

The suspects were held in the notorious Bastille prior to their trials. Rohan was advised to appeal to the king's clemency but considered that to be a tacit admission of guilt. He was determined to have his say in court, where his case would be judged by parlement. Nonetheless, he had to answer carefully to avoid incriminating himself since the king and queen had made clear their wish to see him punished for his part in the embarrassing escapade. Jeanne, meanwhile, continued to twist a web of lies, but it finally started to unravel under persistant questioning.

Cagliostro and Le Guay were acquitted by the court. So too was Rohan - parlement decided he was a fool but not a fraudster. However, the still-angry Louis XVI had the final word by issuing lettres de cachet ordering Cagliostro to be exiled from France and Rohan to be banished to one of his properties in the south of the country. Villette was found guilty of forgery and sent into exile. Nicolas de La Motte was found guilty in absentia - his punishment, if he were ever caught, was life as a galley slave.

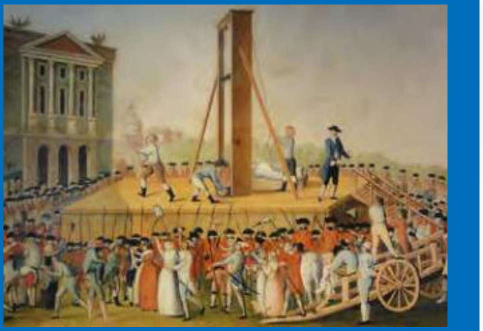
And what of the mastermind of the whole operation? Jeanne de La Motte was found guilty and whipped, branded with a V (for voleuse meaning 'thief') on each shoulder and imprisoned in the Salpêtrière, a notorious prison for prostitutes. It did not hold her long. A year after her life sentence began, Jeanne was plucked from jail with the help of anonymous collaborators on the outside and whisked away to London. There, as the French Revolution ignited across the Channel, Jeanne composed her memoirs.

In her scurrilous and fantastical account of her life, Jeanne decries her innocence. She says that Rohan and Marie Antoinette were lovers and that queen was well aware of the purchase of the diamond necklace. And if you believe that, you'll believe anything.

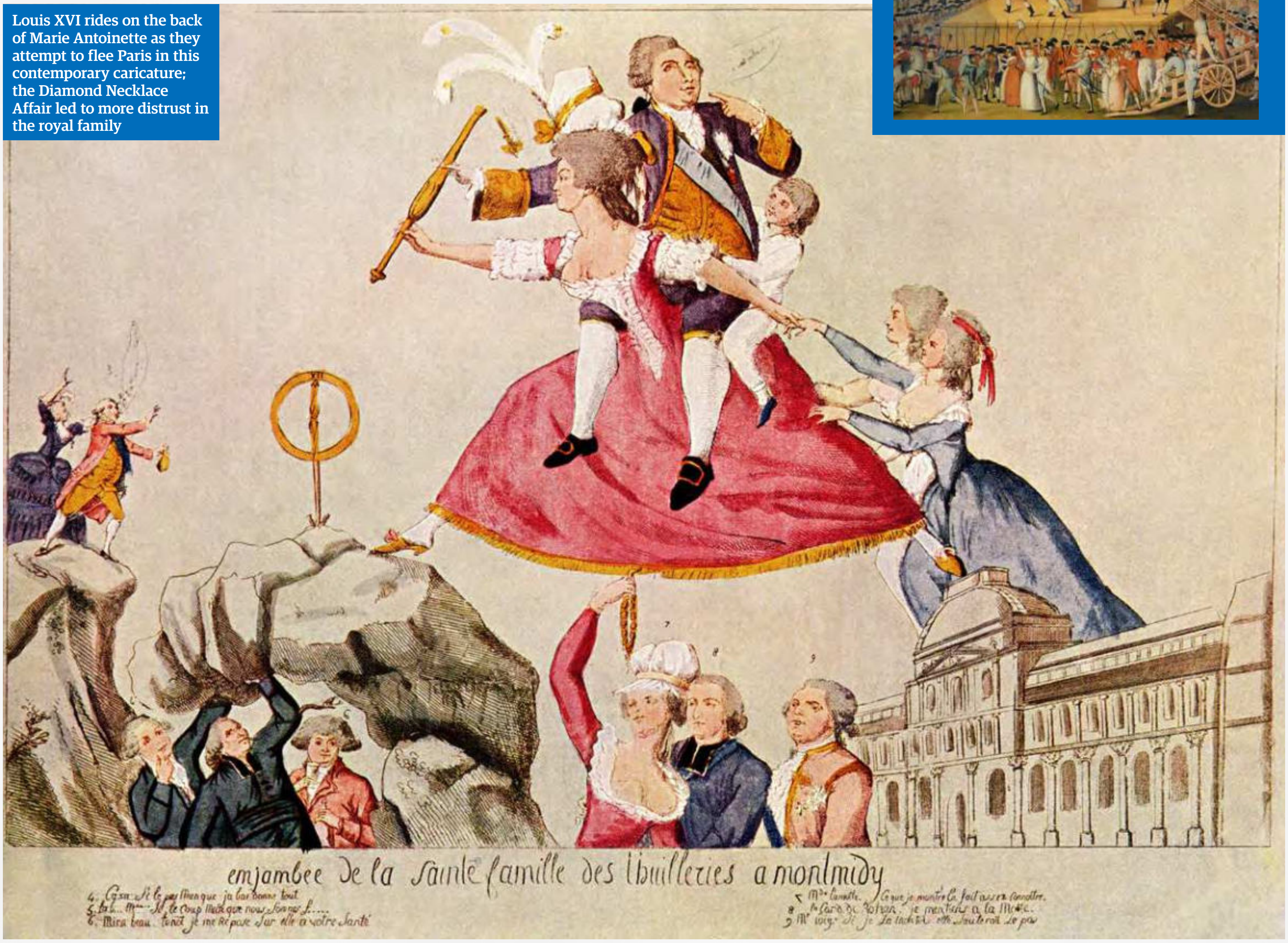
MADAME DÉFICIT

Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, although not part of the scam to steal valuable jewels, decided to prosecute the suspects in the Diamond Necklace Affair to defend their honour. It had the opposite effect. Many people followed the trial and made up their own minds, and the sordid affair added to the queen's burgeoning reputation as a spendthrift. After all, was this not the woman who had been nicknamed 'Madame Déficit' for her profligate purchasing?

After the Diamond Necklace Affair, the French public viewed Marie Antoinette with increasing disdain. Leaflets and pamphlets attacking her circulated in the capital. Almost three years after Rohan was freed, the French Revolution broke out. Marie Antoinette was insulted as never before when she was returned to Paris after an ignominious attempt to flee and her hair reportedly turned white overnight. There was no way to rehabilitate her reputation. On 16 October 1793, the former queen - now referred to only as the Widow Capet - lost her head and her life to the guillotine.



Louis XVI rides on the back of Marie Antoinette as they attempt to flee Paris in this contemporary caricature; the Diamond Necklace Affair led to more distrust in the royal family


emjambee de la sainte famille des thuilleries a montmidy

© Alamy, Wiki Images

THE FAMILY SHAME

The family's black sheep, Edward VIII ascended the throne to great fanfare but gave it up within a year, dying a friendless exile with a ruined reputation

Written by **James Price**

"I have found it impossible to carry the heavy burden of responsibility and to discharge my duties as king as I would wish to do without the help and support of the woman I love… And now, we all have a new king. I wish him and you, his people, happiness and prosperity with all my heart. God bless you all! God save the king!"

With these final words, broadcast over BBC Radio on 11 December 1936 at Windsor Castle, the man who had until recently been Edward VIII announced to his former subjects that he had abdicated as king in favour of his younger brother following a tumultuous end to his 325-day reign.

The former king returned to his family, kissing them goodbye and sharing a farewell drink with his brothers. As he left, he bowed to Albert, the younger brother who had succeeded him, and headed off to Portsmouth, where a Royal Navy destroyer was waiting to take him away from the country he had once ruled.

Once the wildly popular King Edward VIII and the shining beacon of hope for the British Empire, he would never feel welcome in Britain again and would live the rest of his life a tragic and somewhat embarrassing outcast of the royal family in effective exile. And the reason he felt compelled to surrender the throne he had been born and raised to sit on, risking constitutional crisis and division across a global empire, was that he wished to marry a divorced woman.

As hard as it is to understand today, the United Kingdom's divorce laws at the time were strict. As the Church of England did not approve of divorce, divorcees were forbidden in law to remarry while their former partner lived. Edward, who as monarch was also the head of the Church of England (ironically the result of Henry VIII's determination to end his own marriage) was as bound to this law as any other. In seeking to marry Wallis Simpson, who had already left one husband and was in the midst of a second divorce, Edward put himself on a collision course with an inflexible church, a disapproving government and many of his subjects.

This decision, taken for love, changed the course of the monarchy and split the royal family - it led to a man who was at first treated with adulation being shunned by his family, driven from his home, kept away from family occasions and having his wife - whose biggest crime was getting divorced - ignored and looked down upon by generations of the royal family.

But despite this tragic story having all the ingredients to be the greatest romantic act of the 20th century, Edward VIII's legacy has become shrouded in sinister suspicions - of extremist political views, ties to Nazism and even suggestions he was the 'traitor king', prepared to be Hitler's puppet in order to regain the throne he'd felt compelled to leave.

"Edward would not accept any suggestion of separation, even threatening to kill himself"

The man who ruled for just 325 days has cast a large and menacing shadow over the Windsor dynasty and continues to draw significant debate and interest today. But how did it come to this?

Edward Albert Christian George Andrew Patrick David, or simply David to his family, was not always doomed to tragic failure. Having served during World War I and conducted himself admirably during globe-trotting tours of the British Empire, he was hugely popular in Britain as well as abroad. He also won support for his tours of deprived areas of Britain to champion the common people, and his support for back-to-work schemes. With flair, modernism, good looks and charisma, he won attention and acclaim the world over. He was, according to historian Michael Bloch, "the idol of all classes, built up by the press and official propaganda into an almost godlike figure."

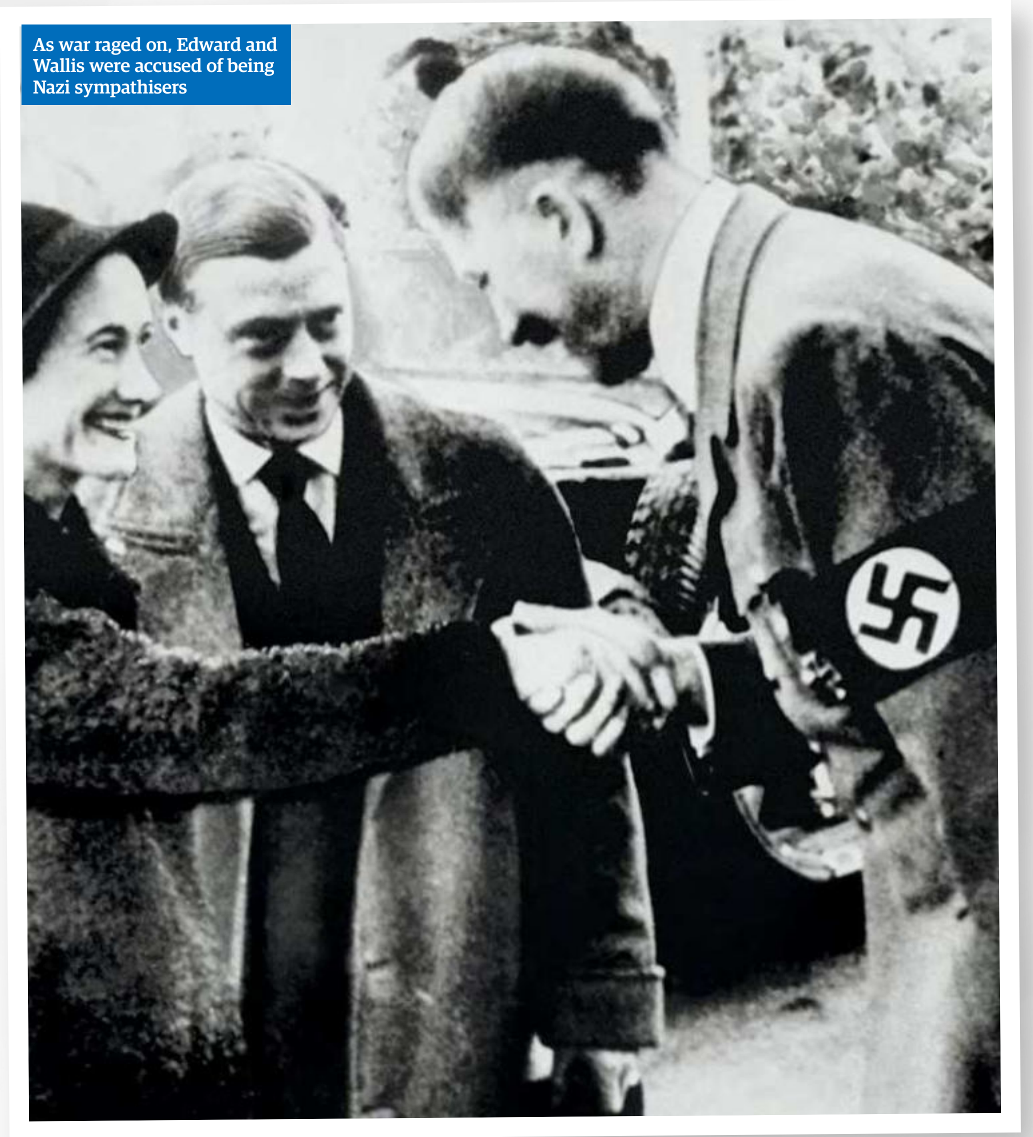
But the Prince of Wales, as he was then, also quickly developed a reputation as a playboy. He surrounded himself with a close circle that largely came from outside court life. His more flamboyant attitudes drew the ire of conservative establishment figures, not least Alan 'Tommy' Lascelles, the future private secretary to George VI and Elizabeth II, who remarked in 1927, "I can't help thinking that the best thing that could happen to him and the country, would be for him to break his neck." It is also telling that this was said to Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, who agreed with Lascelles' sentiment about Edward.

The prince had a penchant for married women, and had several affairs with prominent socialites, including Freda Dudley Ward and Thelma, Viscount Furness, an American married to a British nobleman. The prince was a fan of all things American, so Lady Furness introduced him to British-American businessman Ernest Simpson and his American wife, Wallis, in 1931. The couple soon joined the prince's inner circle, but by 1934 it was clear that Wallis had come to be a great deal more than a mere friend. The clouds of constitutional crisis were already looming over the prince's head.

As a once-divorced and currently married American woman of no significant wealth or family pedigree, it is unsurprising that the Prince of Wales's choice of companion did not meet with approval. His father, a stern disciplinarian, was said to be particularly disapproving of his son's infatuation with Wallis, and believed his son's rejection of his 'duty' to marry and settle down with someone suitable was a sure sign of Edward's unsuitability to rule: "After I am dead, the boy will ruin himself within 12 months," he is prophetically quoted as saying.

But despite this disapproval - or because of it, as he had a strained relationship with his father - Edward drew Wallis closer to him, and in 1935 dropped all pretence of secrecy, openly holidaying with her and taking her on tours without her husband. Wallis was said to have treated Edward poorly - he lavished her with gifts while she talked down to him and showed him little respect. She referred to him in letters to Ernest as 'Peter Pan' - the boyish prince who wouldn't grow up.

On 11 December 1936, Edward VIII gave a speech on the radio, declaring his intention to abdicate



As war raged on, Edward and Wallis were accused of being Nazi sympathisers

In 1967, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor were invited to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Edward's mother, Queen Mary

This did little to endear her to the courtiers, but such a free attitude in a constrained world was one of the alluring aspects of Wallis to Edward's eyes. According to Bloch, "There is no doubt that his lonely nature found in her a spiritual comradeship... he felt that he and Mrs Simpson were made for each other." That he was obsessed with her was all too apparent. According to historian Anna Pasternak, courtiers remarked how he was "exalté to the point of madness."

Edward was sheltered from public scrutiny in Britain by a gentlemen's agreement between the press and the royal family to not report personal dealings. So despite his questionable personal dealings and increasing concern from courtiers that the prince was more concerned with his social life than royal duties, he remained hugely popular among all classes of British society. But while the masses worshipped the prince, he himself had misgivings, and writing in 1950 in Life magazine claims to have discussed with his brothers the possibility of abdicating the throne once their father died as early as 1935.

The prince could hide from his responsibilities no longer when George V - who had suffered with a number of health problems - died, and the Prince of Wales became King Edward VIII on 20 January 1936. Edward's account of the immediate aftermath of his father's death reveals how unprepared mentally he was for his new role: "While my mind was still trying to comprehend the profound event that had in that instant occurred, my mother did an unexpected thing. She took my hand in hers and kissed it; before I could stop him my brother George, who was standing beside her, stepped forward and followed her example. The action embarrassed me."

"For the first time he had no direction or place in the world"

Edward VIII's reign was brief, riven with divisions and uncertainty. He immediately broke convention by watching the proclamation of his accession to the throne from the window of St James's Palace – with Wallis Simpson stood right beside him. He also set about making cuts in the royal household. This could have been a modernising act, as the country still reeled from the Great Depression, but while he made these cuts to jobs and salaries he also lavished Wallis with numerous gifts. This did nothing to endear either of them to the household.

Edward was also reluctant to discuss his coronation – a hugely important ceremony. His reason for wishing to avoid it was, he later wrote, because it was a sacred ritual, and he could not face "being crowned with a lie on my lips." He would not cross the line, as he saw it, that would make him king before God. The lie he referred to, of course, was his intention to marry Wallis Simpson.

It seems that Wallis herself attempted multiple times to halt the divorce. In private letters, she yearns to be out of the situation: "I really must return to Ernest… I am sure you and I would only create disaster together," she wrote to the king in October 1936.

However, Edward would not accept any suggestion of separation, even threatening to kill himself if she left him, according to some accounts. "At the time of the abdication, Edward slept with a loaded gun under his pillow and threatened to kill himself if Wallis forsook him," Pasternak reported. Whether he went to this extreme or not, Edward himself acknowledges that Wallis tried to leave him. Again writing in Life in 1950, he recalled how Wallis had messaged him to say, "'Under no circumstances was I to give up the throne'. Even had she been able to make herself understood, her plea would not have diverted me from my determined course… in the desperate hope of staying the abdication she had, alone, decided to leave me." Wallis, whatever her original intentions, faced no escape.

When Wallis obtained the first stage of her divorce from the court in October 1936, Edward confronted Prime Minister Baldwin, expressing his intentions. "Marriage had become an indispensable condition to my continued existence, whether as king or as man… If I could marry her as king, all well and good. I would be happy and in consequence a better king. But if, on the other hand, the Government opposed the marriage… then I was prepared to go," he declared.

Several alternatives were proposed by the king and his advisers: Winston Churchill advocated delay. A morganatic marriage was also put forward - where Wallis would be his wife but not queen - but Baldwin's cabinet rejected this.

Baldwin laid out the options to the king: abandon the marriage; abdicate the throne; or insist on marriage and have the entire government resign - bringing to a head a constitutional crisis. Edward was not deterred: "If the real intention was to scare me into giving up Wallis by pointing at my head this big pistol of the Government's threatened resignation they had clearly misjudged their man," he later explained.

And so Edward made the decision to abdicate the throne he had been raised to warm, in favour of his "untrained, reluctant and embarrassed successor of far less obvious gifts," as Bloch summarised. Edward signed the papers of abdication at Fort Belvedere on 10 December 1936 in the presence of his brothers.

The public were dismayed: kept in the dark until just a few days before the abdication, opinion was bitterly divided. Some saw in it a tragedy that inflexible systems and an uncompromising government had forced out the rightful ruler; others saw an unforgivable dereliction of duty. Wallis Simpson became a schemer who tore an empire apart in many eyes.

Had Edward used Wallis as an excuse to escape the responsibility of being king? It is hotly contested, though his determination to marry Wallis whatever the cost suggests that this alone was his aim. Edward, to no great surprise, argued it was both love and duty that drove him: "I certainly

The Duke and Duchess of Windsor enjoy time together during their time in the Bahamas, safely away from events in Europe

THE MARBURG FILES

In May 1945 Allied forces captured a German translator, who took them to a store of secret Nazi documents. Most Nazi paperwork had been hastily destroyed, so its survival was remarkable. Years later, when it was checked by British, French and American historians, a file on the duke and duchess came to light - the Marburg Files. And the contents were explosive.

They detailed telegrams pertaining to the couple and reported conversations, in which the duke was dismissive of the war effort and the chances of British victory. One such conversation was with a Spanish diplomat. According to historian Karina Urbach, Don Javier Bermejillo reported the duke blaming "the Jews, the Reds and the Foreign Office for the war". In a conversation on 25 June 1940, "Bermejillo reported that Windsor stressed if one bombed England effectively this could bring peace," according to Urbach.

Details were also passed on of conversations about the duke returning to the British throne, but the duke replied that it was constitutionally impossible after an abdication. "When [an] agent then remarked the course of war may produce changes even in the British constitution the duchess in particular became very thoughtful."

This also tied in with details of a plot, named Operation Willi, in which the Germans planned to kidnap or persuade the couple to stay in Madrid instead of sailing to the Bahamas, and there be induced to retake the throne with German help, or force a peace with Britain.

Churchill, who heard of the files' existence, worked to have all the documents destroyed, but copies had already been made and sent to the US. He instead persuaded the Americans to not publish, dismissing the entire thing as "tendentious and unreliable". The US president agreed, stating they were "obviously concocted with some idea of promoting German propaganda and weakening western resistance" and were "totally unfair."

Their trip to Germany in 1937 convinced high-ranking Nazis of their willingness to aid Germany during WWII

married because I chose the path of love, but I abdicated because I chose the path of duty. I did not value the crown so lightly that I gave it away hastily. I valued it so deeply I surrendered it rather than risk any impairment of its prestige."

Edward, so wrapped up in trying to secure his marriage, had made little thought of where he would go next. His demands had been to get Wallis's divorce sorted immediately (which did not occur), to be allowed to return to Fort Belvedere, the one place he considered home (he was not, despite his brother's promise) and to be given a pension (which he received, despite already amassing money for this very moment).

Edward - who was made Duke of Windsor - left for the continent. The globe-spanning empire of 500 million people was still simply not large enough for two kings, so he headed to Austria to be reunited with Wallis. There they waited for five months for her divorce, and finally wed on 3 June 1937 in France - though no members of the royal family were in attendance.

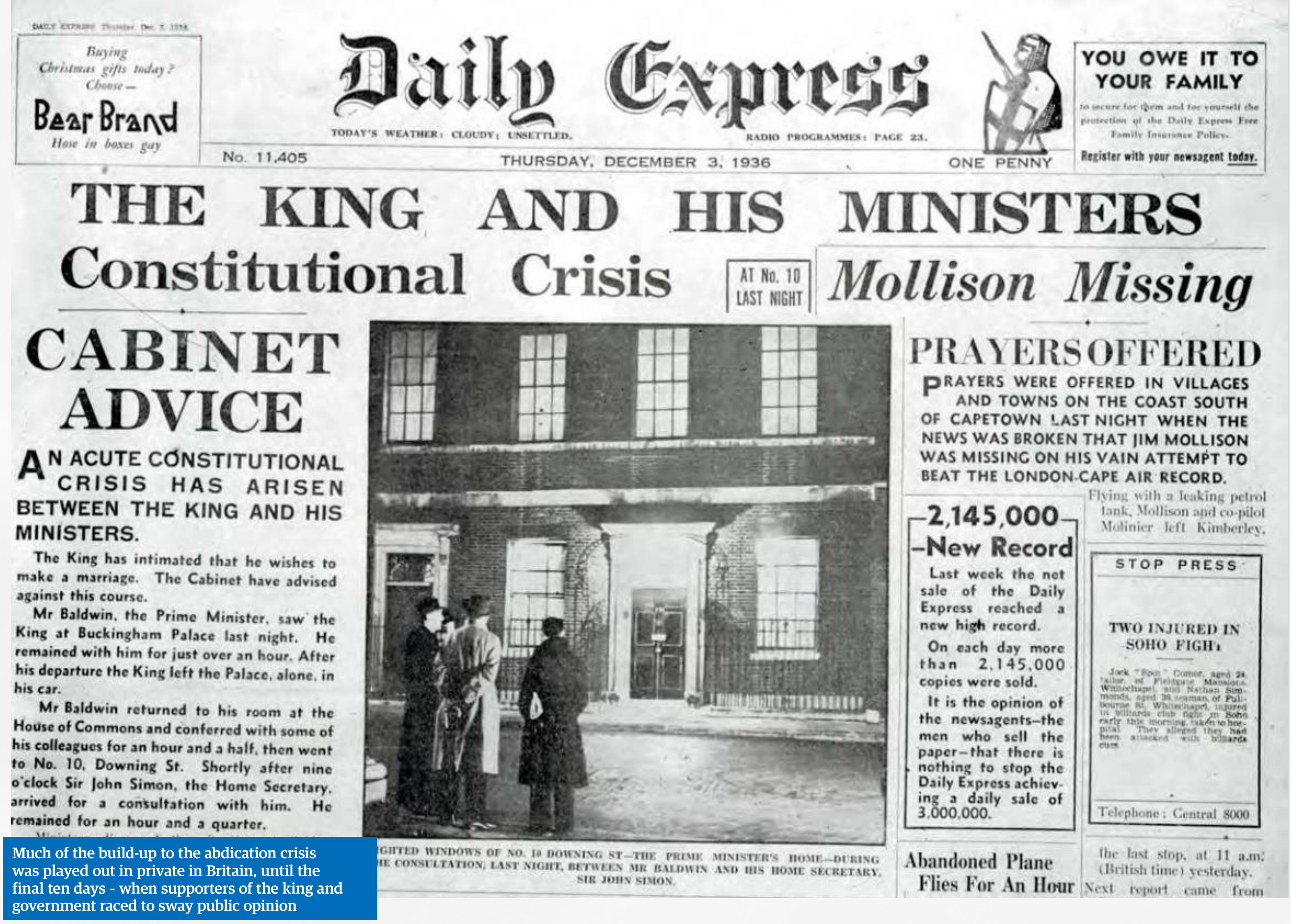
That George VI did not attend is no huge surprise, but the absence of any of the family illustrates the growing discord. It had been assumed by many, not least the duke, that he would be able to return to Britain and the royal family within a few years and take on a junior position. Even in 1938, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain argued: "The right course was for the Duke of Windsor to be treated as soon as possible as a younger brother of the king who could take some of the royal functions off his brother's hands," according to Bloch.

> "He remained on bad terms with his mother"

But relations became increasingly strained. Resentment bubbled away in the royal family, who disliked the duke's attempts to squeeze money from them and live a celebrity lifestyle, while convictions hardened - particularly in his mother - that the duke had turned his back on his duty to family and country. The Duke of Windsor, on the other hand, was bitterly wounded by the king's refusal to bestow the name 'Her Royal Highness' on Wallis. It was a sore point that rankled for the rest of the duke's life.

It was this lack of proper respect, according to the duke, that led the couple in 1937 to commit another controversial act - a tour of Nazi Germany and a meeting with Hitler. This act and the couple's political outlook has divided historians ever since. Were they Nazi supporters? Writer Andrew Morton argues that the real reason for the tour "was to show Wallis a good time and see exactly what it was like to enjoy a royal tour." The couple were curtsied to, cheered and called 'Your Royal Highness' at every opportunity. But was that the only reason for the visit?

The Duke of Windsor, following his abdication, for the first time in his life had no direction or place in the world. Clearly, he was trying to stay relevant and carve out a role for himself on the global stage. But there is also significant evidence suggesting the duke was, if not a full-blown Nazi, then sympathetic. The duke's political opinions are mired in mystery. While many historians, such as Carolyn Harris, argue that the visit to Germany was because the duke "seems to have envisioned a diplomatic role for himself as a mediator between Britain and Germany," others argue it was a sign of his political allegiances. Morton says, "he was certainly sympathetic… even after the war he



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THE KING AND HIS MINISTERS

Constitutional Crisis

CABINET ADVICE

AN ACUTE CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS HAS ARISEN BETWEEN THE KING AND HIS MINISTERS.

The King has intimated that he wishes to make a marriage. The Cabinet have advised against this course.

Mr Baldwin, the Prime Minister, saw the King at Buckingham Palace last night. He remained with him for just over an hour. After his departure the King left the Palace, alone, in his car.

Mr Baldwin returned to his room at the House of Commons and conferred with some of his colleagues for an hour and a half, then went to No. 10, Downing St. Shortly after nine o'clock Sir John Simon, the Home Secretary, arrived for a consultation with him. He remained for an hour and a quarter.

AT No. 10 LAST NIGHT

GHTED WINDOWS OF NO. 10 DOWNING ST—THE PRIME MINISTER'S HOME—DURING HE CONSULTATION, LAST NIGHT, BETWEEN MR BALDWIN AND HIS HOME SECRETARY, SIR JOHN SIMON.

Mollison Missing

PRAYERS OFFERED

PRAYERS WERE OFFERED IN VILLAGES AND TOWNS ON THE COAST SOUTH OF CAPETOWN LAST NIGHT WHEN THE NEWS WAS BROKEN THAT JIM MOLLISON WAS MISSING ON HIS VAIN ATTEMPT TO BEAT THE LONDON-CAPE AIR RECORD.

Flying with a leaking petrol tank, Mollison and co-pilot Molinier left Kimberley,

2,145,000 –New Record

Last week the net sale of the Daily Express reached a new high record.

On each day more than 2,145,000 copies were sold.

It is the opinion of the newsagents—the men who sell the paper—that there is nothing to stop the Daily Express achieving a daily sale of 3,000,000.

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the last stop, at 11 a.m. (British time) yesterday. Next report came from

Much of the build-up to the abdication crisis was played out in private in Britain, until the final ten days - when supporters of the king and government raced to sway public opinion thought Hitler was a good fellow and that he'd done a good job in Germany, and he was also anti-Semitic, before, during and after the war."

These opinions have been fuelled by quotes attributed to Hitler himself by the likes of the less-than-trustworthy Nazi Albert Speer. He reported Hitler saying, "If [the duke] had stayed, everything would have been different. His abdication was a severe loss for us." Released FBI files also suggest the duchess was in a relationship with Joachim von Ribbentrop, the Nazi foreign minister, and later passed him sensitive information.

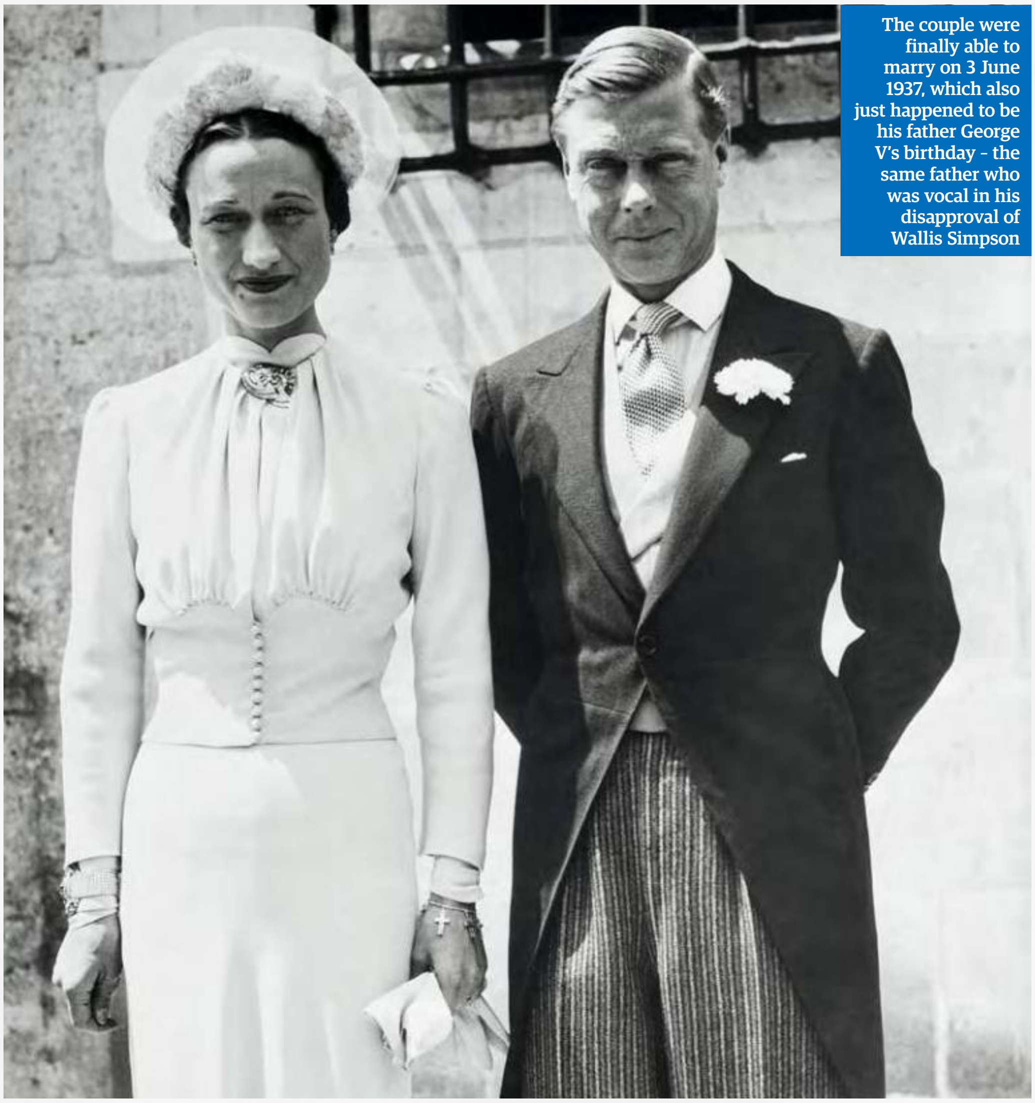
But whatever the real reasons for the visit, it has tarnished his reputation and haunted his legacy. The tragic king was to become the traitor king because of this association.

It seems evident, however, that the duke wanted peace, almost at any cost. Having witnessed the horrors of WWI, he was far from alone in wanting to avoid conflict. The policy of appeasement towards the Nazis by the British in the 1930s was pursued almost until the declaration of war. In 1939 the duke took to the radio to broadcast a message of peace. Whether the duke continued to work towards this end even during the war is suggested. Secret Nazi files uncovered after WWII revealed documents about the Windsors suggesting they were critical of the war and supportive of peace with Germany.

At the outbreak of war the duke and duchess had been residing in France. The duke promptly offered his services as a go-between for the British and French militaries. Upon the German conquest, the couple headed to fascist Madrid, before being encouraged on to neutral but British-friendly Portugal. With rumours circulating about the duke and duchess's political affinities, as well as the couple being dangerously exposed on the continent, Churchill hatched a plan to send the duke to govern the Bahamas.

The duke was far from delighted by this suggestion, and his reluctance even reportedly prompted Churchill to threaten him with court martial. The duke finally relented, and remained in the Bahamas from August 1940 until the end of the war. The duchess was said to call it "our St Helena" in reference to the tiny, remote island Napoleon Bonaparte had been exiled to. For them it was not a chance to serve in part of the British Empire: it was a banishment.

Following the conclusion of WWII, the duke resigned as governor and returned to Europe. But the time apart and the strains of war did not make a family reunion any more likely. Hoping to get a position as a diplomat of sorts between Britain and the US in 1945, his hopes were dashed as the royal family remained distant. Whether his apparent Nazi sympathies bred resentment and mistrust, it is not entirely clear, although King George VI was said to have read the Marburg Files: Sir Alexander Cardigan revealed the king "fussed about the Duke of Windsor's file and the captured German documents," according to Bloch.



The couple were finally able to marry on 3 June 1937, which also just happened to be his father George V's birthday - the same father who was vocal in his disapproval of Wallis Simpson

The duke and duchess remained in temporary and borrowed homes in France, entertaining guests and hosting parties. But it was far from a stimulating existence, and the duke tried and failed repeatedly to weave a path back into the royal family. Not even the peacetime leadership of Churchill in 1951 brought a reconciliation. The duke's most notable returns to Britain were to attend the funerals of his family - starting with his brother and king, George VI, in 1952.

Following George's death, Elizabeth ascended the throne, although again this did not precipitate a reconciliation. The duke even stayed away from the coronation, conveniently arguing that a former sovereign was not a fit guest at the ceremony.

He remained on particularly bad terms with his mother, who had been badly affected by losing three of her sons - and despising a fourth. The antipathy was mutual, and when the duke returned to Britain for her funeral in 1953, the words he wrote to Wallis, who was forbidden from coming, were far from heartbroken: "I'm afraid her veins have always been as icy cold as they are in death." This bitterness was extended to the rest of his family: "What a smug stinking lot my relations are, and you've never seen such a seedy worn-out bunch of old hags most of them have become."

Following his brother's death the duke seems to have become resigned to his state of exile, and the couple finally bought their own property in France. The duke and duchess were called 'Your Royal Highness' and the servants wore royal livery. The duke spent much of his time writing his memoirs and articles for magazines. He never held an official office again.

There were small moments of reconciliation - both he and the duchess were invited to Britain in 1967 to attend the unveiling of a plaque to the duke's mother. It was a gesture made by the Queen, though the Queen Mother was notably absent, having also grown to detest the duke and duchess. Clearly there was too much bad blood to ever heal these wounds within the family.

The duke died of throat cancer in France on 28 May 1972 at the age of 77. He was visited in his final days by Queen Elizabeth, in another final gesture of reconciliation. He was finally to return to Britain after death, and was buried in the royal cemetery near Windsor Castle - the duchess attended the funeral and even stayed at Buckingham Palace. Wallis would eventually join her husband, who left his throne for her, 14 years later, having spent the final years of her life as a recluse.

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THE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST ANDREW

How Queen Elizabeth II's second son became embroiled in a scandal involving one of the most notorious sex offenders of the 21st century

Written by **Nigel Keith**

When the news broke that Prince Andrew, Duke of York, was potentially involved and friends with one of the 21st century's most notorious sex offenders – Jeffrey Epstein – it was described by one journalist as having "shaken the monarchy itself". The allegations were that Virginia Giuffre, a then-17-year-old sex trafficking victim of Epstein, had been forced to sleep with Andrew on several occasions in the early 2000s. Despite reaching a settlement with Giuffre in February 2022, the scandal has had a far reaching impact on the prince, often claimed to be the favourite son of Queen Elizabeth II. But where did the allegations come from and just what did they claim?

To understand the accusations against Andrew, you must first look at Epstein. Born in 1953, he was a New York financier who, in 1974, began teaching maths and physics at the private Dalton School. He was fired in 1976 for "poor performance", according to the *New York Times*. However this was not before the father of one of his students recommended him to a senior partner at the Wall Street bank Bear Stearns, where Epstein became an assistant and was quickly promoted. By 1982, his own firm, Epstein & Co, had been launched and his career skyrocketed, his wealth allowing him to buy numerous homes and make a number of rich and powerful friends.

Everything began to unravel in 2005, when Epstein was investigated after he was reported to have molested a 14-year-old girl at his home in Palm Springs, Florida. This began an exhaustive joint investigation with the FBI, with allegations that numerous girls had been abused in the same way. Epstein would eventually avoid federal charges and a life sentence, but would be convicted in 2008. Sentenced to 18 months in prison, he was released after 13 months.

On 20 February 2011, the *News of the World*'s investigations editor Mazher Mahmood's article 'Prince Andy & The Paedo' was published. It was built around a photo of the prince walking in New York City's Central Park with Epstein in December 2010, drawing attention to their friendship at a time when Epstein was already a convicted sex offender. Andrew claimed they were introduced in 1999 through Epstein's former girlfriend Ghislaine Maxwell, who was accused of partaking in sexual trafficking for Epstein.

Over the course of 12 years, Andrew is said to have met Epstein ten different times, with the pair having been invited to stay at the Queen's Sandringham residence and also having gone on holiday together to Thailand. When the photo in the park was taken, Andrew claimed to have been breaking off his friendship with Epstein, which is what he always stated was the sole purpose of that visit to New York. But a year later, the *Telegraph* reported that the prince's ex-wife, Sarah Ferguson, had accepted a £15,000 payment from Epstein to cover debts, with the article claiming that Andrew himself had arranged it.

In 2015, Virginia Giuffre (then known as Roberts) made an allegation that at the age of 17 she had

been forced by Maxwell and Epstein to have sex with Andrew. It all came to light during a long-running lawsuit against Epstein - and it was the first time the prince had been named in court. It got worse, though, as Giuffre went on to state that this had occured on three separate occasions while she was a sex trafficking victim. The first time was in 2001 at Maxwell's London home after going to Tramp's Nightclub; the second was at Epstein's New York Mansion; and the third on Epstein's private island, Little Saint James. During the same case, another woman, Johanna Sjoberg, claimed that Andrew had groped her breast. Alongside her claims, Giuffre presented a photo of herself and Prince Andrew, with Maxwell in the background and allegedly taken by Epstein himself, as evidence. The photo, now infamous, was first published by the *Mail on Sunday* in 2011.

On 6 July 2019, Epstein was arrested at Teterboro Airport in New Jersey on charges of underage sex trafficking. After being denied bail, he was held at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in New York and in July was taken to hospital for what was believed to be injuries to his neck, according to the *New York Post*. A mere month later, on 10 August, the notorious sex offender was found dead in his cell. Although the office of the New York city medical examiner ruled the death a suicide by hanging (he was found with a noose constructed out of his bed sheet), private pathologist Dr Michael Baden claimed that he had experienced a number of injuries that were unusual in a case of this naure.

Following the death of Epstein, Prince Andrew appeared on the BBC's *Newsnight* programme on 16 November 2019. During an almost 50-minute interview with journalist Emily Maitlis, he directly confronted the allegations against him and his relationship with Epstein.

But the interview didn't exactly have the effect Andrew wanted - instead, it immediately generated controversy due to several of his claims. One was that he could not possibly have had sex with Virginia Giuffre on 10 March 2001 for a very strange reason: "I was at home, I was with the children and I'd taken Beatrice [his elder daughter] to a Pizza Express in Woking for a party at, I suppose, sort of 4 or 5 in the afternoon. And then because the duchess was away, we have a simple rule in the family that when one is away the other one is there".

Maitlis was instantly suspicious, asking Andrew: "Why would you remember that so specifically? Why would you remember a Pizza Express birthday and being at home?"

Andrew responded: "Because going to Pizza Express in Woking is an unusual thing for me to do." He then followed this up with a comment responding to Giuffre's claims that he had danced with her and sweated profusely. When Maitlis mentioned this, Andrew stated: "I have a peculiar medical condition, which is that I don't sweat, or I didn't sweat at the time." He continued, "I'm afraid to say there's a medical condition that says that I didn't do it."

In the aftermath of what was considered a disastrous performance, it was announced on 20 November 2019 that the prince would step back from royal duties for the "foreseeable future". The BBC's royal correspondent, Jonny Dymond, commented that "this is without precedent in modern times".

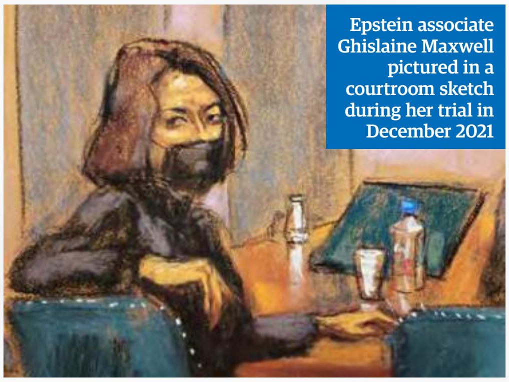
It wasn't over, though. In August 2021, Giuffre filed a lawsuit against Andrew. In a statement, she made her intentions clear: "I am holding Prince Andrew accountable for what he did to me. The powerful and the rich are not exempt from being held responsible for their actions."

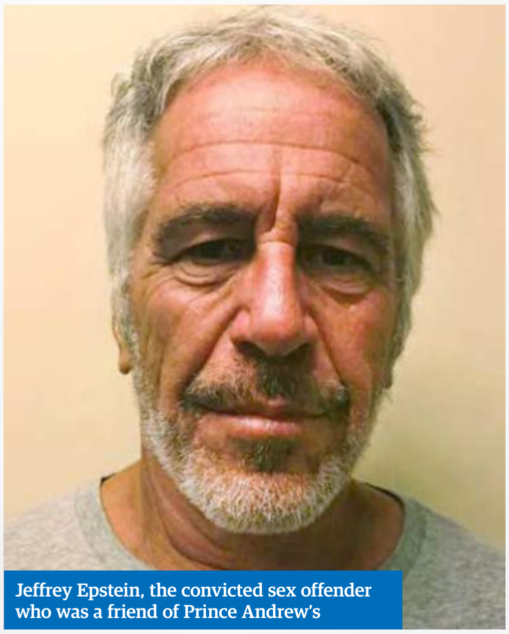
In December 2021, Andrew and Giuffre's lawyers were undergoing the process of discovery, a pre-court procedure that allows both sides to obtain evidence from the other for use during the trial. Giuffre's lawyers requested that documents relating to the prince's inability to sweat, among others, be handed over. In December 2021, Epstein's associate Ghislaine Maxwell was found guilty of sex trafficking alongside four other charges and in early January 2022, Andrew's request that the case be dismissed following his denial of the allegations was rejected.

On 13 January 2022, with it now seeming that the prince would indeed have to face the case in the courts, it was announced that he would no longer be using the official title of 'His Royal Highness' and that his military titles (excluding his service title of vice admiral) and royal patronages would be returned to the Queen. According to a statement from Buckingham Palace, the announcement meant that "the Duke of York will continue not to undertake any public duties and is defending this case as a private citizen".

Yet a mere month later, on 15 February, a settlement was reached between Andrew and Giuffre's lawyers. As of writing, the details of the settlement remain unknown, although it has been reported that it could be as high as £12 million (according to *Inews*), while an unconfirmed report quoted £7.5 million (according to the *Guardian*). Questions were immediately raised as to whether the source of the money was the British taxpayer, with a statement being issued from the treasury to confirm it was not.

At the time of writing, Andrew has most recently generated controversy for appearing at the Queen's side at a memorial service for his father, Prince Phillip, on 29 March 2022, with some questioning if the move demonstrated an attempt to rehabilitate his image. In an article with the *Guardian* published the same day, sexual abuse campaigner Hera Hussain commented that the prince's attendance was "a painful reminder to survivors everywhere about how powerful men are able to absolve themselves from their conduct and use public appearances to rebuild their image". It remains to be seen how prominent a public role the prince will take in future events, or if he will ever be able to shake off the impact of the allegations made against him.


Epstein associate Ghislaine Maxwell pictured in a courtroom sketch during her trial in December 2021

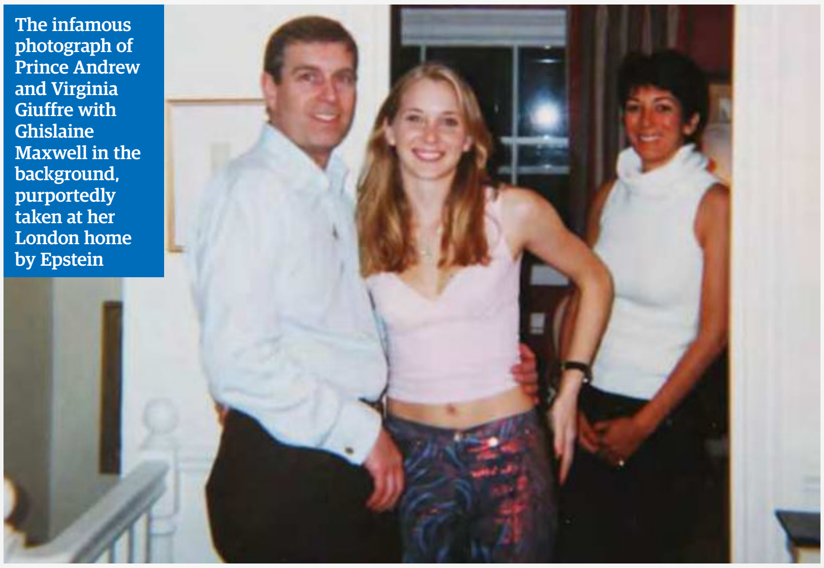

Jeffrey Epstein, the convicted sex offender who was a friend of Prince Andrew's

Virginia Giuffre, who made a series of allegations against Prince Andrew, with her lawyer David Boies

Prince Andrew is said to be the favourite son of Queen Elizabeth II

IFIED COURT SYSTEM

> “It remains to be seen how prominent a public role the prince will take in future events”



The infamous photograph of Prince Andrew and Virginia Giuffre with Ghislaine Maxwell in the background, purportedly taken at her London home by Epstein

© Alamy

THE RISE AND FALL OF JUAN CARLOS

Uncover the financial scandals that sent the popular king of Spain into ignominious exile

Written by **Scott Reeves**

On 3 August 2020, King Felipe of Spain announced that his father and abdicated predecessor had sent him a letter indicating he was going into voluntary exile. By the time the news was made public, the former king had already boarded a private plane in great secrecy at Vigo Airport and flown to a new life away from public scrutiny. Two weeks later, the royal palace revealed that its former resident was now living in Abu Dhabi.

It was a remarkable fall from grace for a monarch who was once overwhelmingly popular and admired both in his home country and around the world. King Juan Carlos I was the figurehead of a nation that escaped authoritarianism and turned peacefully to democracy. After 39 years of dictatorship, his reign represented 39 years of rebirth and stability. What turned the fortunes of this respected man so quickly and dramatically?

Juan Carlos was born into a royal family without a kingdom. His grandfather, King Alfonso XIII, had retreated into exile after the republican movement gained victory in 1931 elections that were effectively a plebiscite on the future of the monarchy. Juan Carlos' father, Infante Juan, continued the family's claim to the throne after Alfonso died in 1941, but Francisco Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War denied him the chance to reign.

A path for the Borbóns to reclaim the throne emerged in 1947 when Franco passed a law re-establishing the Spanish monarchy, albeit with conditions attached. Franco was declared head of state for life with the right to choose his successor. Considering Infante Juan to be too liberal, Franco eventually opted to skip a generation and selected Juan Carlos as his heir in 1969. The Generalísimo thought that Juan Carlos, who had been educated in Francoist Spain and served in the Spanish armed forces, would continue to uphold the authoritarian state.

> "The king's excellent reputation, crafted over decades of careful and patient leadership, took a sudden and dramatic dive"

The newly appointed Prince of Spain happily swore loyalty to the Movimiento Nacional, Franco's overarching political organisation that controlled Spain, and appeared at official state ceremonies alongside the dictator. Juan Carlos stood in for Franco when the Generalísimo's health began to fail and seamlessly assumed power when Franco died in November 1975.

Yet Juan Carlos had been playing the long game. He quickly moved to dismantle Franco's authoritarian state and enact reforms democratising Spain. Opposition leaders were consulted and political parties were allowed to form. The king faced down a military coup and, once the country was stable and the survival of democracy was ensured, he withdrew from active participation in politics. Such was his popularity that even the leader of the Spanish communists - once the royal family's fiercest opponents - declared: "Today, we are all monarchists."

As Spain enjoyed an economic boom courtesy of the growth of foreign tourism and joining the EEC in 1986, few sought a return to the old ways of authoritarianism. A 2005 opinion poll declared that 77.5 per cent of Spaniards thought that Juan Carlos was 'good or very good' and he was a respected figurehead in countries across the Latin American world. Yet the king's excellent reputation, crafted over decades of careful and patient leadership, took a sudden and dramatic dive.

The turning point was a stumble that led to a triple fracture of the king's hip. The fall occurred in April 2012 while Juan Carlos was on a hunting trip in Botswana. News that the 74-year-old monarch was being flown home for an emergency operation drew attention to exactly why Juan Carlos was hunting big game in Africa at all. At best, the trip was tone deaf. Photographs started to circulate of Juan Carlos standing proud in front of an elephant he had shot. The Spanish branch of the World Wide Fund for Nature quickly voted to remove the king as their honorary president. Newspapers also jumped on the fact that Juan Carlos was travelling with his mistress, Corinna zu Sayn-Wittgenstein, revealing the news of the extra-marital affair for the first time - although it wasn't the first time the king had strayed.

Perhaps worse, Spain was still reeling from the financial crisis of 2008. Unemployment was at 23 per cent, even higher at 50 per cent for young workers. There was talk of Spain crashing out of the eurozone monetary union. In the midst of

Juan Carlos enjoyed entertaining royalty on his personal €18m yacht, but his attempts to give it up simply drew attention to exactly who paid for it in the first place

The Death of Infante Alfonso

At 8.30pm on 29 March 1956, a gunshot echoed through the corridors of Villa Giralda in Estoril, Portugal. Infante Alfonso, younger brother of Juan Carlos, had been shot in the forehead and died within minutes. He was 14 years old. The only other person in the room at the time was 18-year-old Juan Carlos.

The official statement declared Alfonso had shot himself while cleaning a revolver. But was that the truth? Several people said they were told that Juan Carlos had fired the fatal shot - perhaps unaware that the gun was loaded, perhaps an accidental discharge when his arm was knocked. Their father reportedly grabbed Juan Carlos and demanded of him, "Swear to me that you didn't do it on purpose!"

Juan Carlos was packed back off to military academy in Spain, but the tragic death of his younger brother doesn't seem to have cast a long shadow. The future king completed his studies and, within five years, was carrying out official engagements for the Spanish state. Juan Carlos' role in his brother's premature end seemed to have been quickly forgotten.

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Juan Carlo's broken hip while hunting in Botswana led to activists protesting his love of hunting and caused the king to be dropped by the Spanish WWF

such a dire economic recession, the head of state flying to a hunting holiday thought to cost around €44,000 - twice the average annual salary in Spain - was seen as obscene.

The Botswana debacle occurred at the same time that the Nóos case was being reported in the media. Investigators had delved into the finances of the nonprofit Nóos Institute and suspected that it had claimed €5,800,000 from regional governments for work that was either not carried out or dramatically overstated. Among the leaders of the Nóos Institute to be charged with embezzlement and fraud was Iñaki Urdangarin, Juan Carlos' son-in-law. In April 2013, his wife Infanta Cristina was added to the list of suspects.

Suddenly, the judgement of the king and his family were being scrutinised. Juan Carlos tried to rehabilitate his reputation by giving up his €18 million yacht, but that simply drew attention to the fact that it was an extravagant gift from 25 businessmen. Why were they trying to curry favour with a monarch who had taken no part in politics for years?

Still, it was a surprise when the Spanish prime minister went on television in June 2014 to announce that Juan Carlos had decided to abdicate. Now 76, the king declared it was time for Prince Felipe to assume the throne. The Spanish parliament passed a law to allow the abdication and, tellingly, voted to extend some of the immunity from prosecution that Juan Carlos enjoyed as head of state to cover abdicated monarchs. However, Juan Carlos would now be accountable to the Spanish Supreme Court.

Perhaps he needed immunity from them, too. In summer 2018, newspapers were given a recording of a conversation between a police chief and Juan Carlos' now-former mistress, Corinna zu Sayn-Wittgenstein. She claimed that Juan Carlos had a fortune in a Swiss bank account that derived from kickbacks and payoffs from commercial contracts in the Arabian Gulf, particularly those relating to the Haramain high-speed railway linking Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia, partly constructed by a Spanish consortium. Sayn-Wittgenstein also claimed that Juan Carlos purchased property in her name in Monaco to dodge tax laws and that the head of the Spanish intelligence service had threatened her if she went public.

Investigators looked further into claims of financial irregularity, paying particular attention

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Juan Carlos spent six years as the chosen heir of Franco and seems to have plotted the dismantling of the authoritarian regime while successor-in-waiting

to any possible illegality after June 2014 when Juan Carlos abdicated and lost his sovereign immunity. In 2020, they discovered a €65 million donation by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia to the Lucum Foundation, an account tied to Juan Carlos. King Felipe quickly distanced himself, renouncing any future inheritance from his father to prevent any of the money coming his way. He also announced that his father would lose his public stipend, cutting the former king off from the public purse.

Auditors digging deep into the murky world of Juan Carlos' financial dealings found other avenues to explore. They questioned the use of credit cards by Juan Carlos and his family that were paid off by an overseas account to which Juan Carlos nor his family were signatories. Prosecutors claimed that the credit cards were effectively undisclosed income and subject to tax. In December 2020, Juan Carlos reportedly paid €678,393.72 to the Spanish tax agency to settle the matter and avoid prosecution. Three months later, he chose to regularise another €4 million to cover tax irregularities.

Accounts linked to Juan Carlos and containing millions of euros were uncovered in Jersey, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Exactly where the money came from was unclear, although reports in November 2020 claimed that Juan Carlos made a private trip to Kazakhstan in October 2002 to hunt goats with President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Former mayor Victor Khrapunov claimed that Nazarbayev's bodyguards gave Juan Carlos four or five briefcases containing $5 million in cash. Was this common practise for the Spanish king?

By the time many of the allegations were made public, Juan Carlos had already managed to escape to Zaya Nurai Island, an exclusive retreat 15 minutes by boat from Abu Dhabi. It is surely a comfortable exile; the island boasts a five-star hotel and 11 private mansions. The emeritus king, as he is styled, is said to live in a six-bedroom pile with an acre of grounds and a private beach. Among his guests have been Mohammed bin Zayed, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi.

Yet it is a gilded cage. Juan Carlos rarely leaves the island. Many of the cases against him were dropped in March 2022 for a variety of reasons – insufficient evidence, the statute of limitations, judicial immunity and settling tax bills among them – but the damage to his reputation will be more difficult to avoid. The king who was once lauded for the democratisation of Spain, who was seen as a model monarch for nearly all his 39-year reign, was brought down by the stench of corruption and financial impropriety.

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THE SUSSEXES SPEAK OUT

All you need to know about the Duke and Duchess' explosive interview with Oprah Winfrey

Written by **Scott Reeves**

In January 2020, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex stepped down as working members of the royal family and relocated to California. Their departure, dubbed 'Megxit' by the UK press, was said to have "blindsided" the Queen and other members of the royal family. Announcing their desire for privacy and quiet away from the press, Harry and Meghan have nonetheless found themselves the focus of countless headlines ever since.

On Valentine's Day 2021, the couple revealed they were pregnant after suffering a devastating miscarriage the previous summer. Just a few days later, it was announced that they had filmed an interview with US media mogul Oprah Winfrey, who had attended their wedding. Immediately, speculation grew that the interview would offer the most revealing insight into the royal family since Harry's mother, Princess Diana, gave her controversial interview with Panorama in 1995.

A week after the announcement, it was confirmed by Buckingham Palace that after a planned annual review, the Duke and Duchess would not be returning as working members of the royal family and therefore they would have to give up their royal patronages and honorary military appointments. In response, the couple released a statement reiterating their desire to continue supporting the organisations they had represented, declaring: "We can all live a life of service. Service is universal."

Meanwhile, Harry's grandfather, Prince Philip, had been admitted to hospital after feeling unwell, ultimately undergoing a successful procedure for a pre-existing heart condition. There were calls for the couple to postpone the interview - something that was likely out of their control - in light of Philip's illness, but it was aired as planned.

Unsurprisingly, the interview contained many revelations, such as Meghan's admission that she had not done any research on the royal family before joining them, and nor did she look her husband up online while they were dating. She claimed that she had been given no guidance or etiquette advice on how to be a royal and that she had to quickly learn how to curtsy before meeting the Queen for the first time. Believing it to be "part of the fanfare", Meghan stated that she did not realise the family had to still curtsy to the Queen in private.

She also corrected rumours that she had made the Duchess of Cambridge cry over flower girl dresses, revealing to Oprah that it was the other way around and that Kate had brought her flowers and a note to apologise. Nevertheless, the false story persisted and Meghan was disappointed that nobody attempted to correct it. The Duchess also stated that the fanfare of the wedding led to the couple exchanging vows in private with the Archbishop of Canterbury, three days before the ceremony that was televised worldwide.

Harry admitted that his relationship with both his father, Prince Charles, and his brother, Prince William, had been strained. He claimed that his family "literally cut me off financially", forcing him to sign lucrative deals with companies such as Netflix and Spotify so that he could afford security for his family. He said that Charles had "stopped taking my calls" after the couple stepped back from the royal family and that he felt "really let down". As for William, Harry asserted that he loved him, "but we were on different paths".

Daily Mail
KATE MADE ME CRY
DAILY EXPRESS
MEGHAN'S BOMBSHELL: KATE MADE ME CRY!
ALL CARE HOMES MUST OPEN UP
The Guardian
UK cutting aid 'on backs of the starving', says UN chief
THE TIMES
The Daily Telegraph
Harry and Meghan embody the woke generation
DAILY STAR
FIGHTS.. CAMERA.. ACTION
The Sun
1AM INTERVIEW BOMBSHELL
Meghan may never return here
Queen won't even watch show
Whingey chat dubbed 'Moperah'
MEGXILE
Daily Mirror
OPRAH INTERVIEW BOMBSHELL
They asked how dark Archie's skin would be'

The interview's explosive content made headlines in the UK

Harry and Meghan's interview was watched around the world

ROYAL TITLES EXPLAINED

When Archie was born, it was claimed that Harry and Meghan did not want him to be made a prince. However, in their interview, the couple declared that this was not their decision – leading to speculation about why Archie was not made a prince, with theories suggesting that it is because he is mixed race.

In 1917, King George V issued the 1917 Letters Patent, which restricted who was eligible to use the HRH title and be a prince and princess. Accordingly, the "grandchildren of the sons of any such Sovereign in the direct male line (save only the eldest living son of the eldest son of the Prince of Wales) shall have and enjoy in all occasions the style and title enjoyed by the children of dukes of this realm".

Therefore Prince George, as the eldest son of Prince William, is the only great-grandson of the Queen entitled to be a prince. The rules were adjusted by the Queen in December 2012 to ensure that all of William's children would be entitled to use the HRH title and be a prince or princess. This was done because if William and Kate's firstborn had been a girl, she would not have been eligible for the HRH title or to be a princess, despite being in the direct line of succession to the throne.

As it stands, Archie will automatically become a prince when his grandfather, Prince Charles, ascends the throne. However, Meghan claimed that "they want to change the convention for Archie" so that he would not become a prince, but she did not elaborate further. This could be about Charles' well-known desire to reduce the size of the royal family, although he has never stated his plan on how he will achieve this.

Even so, the couple revealed that they maintained a close relationship with the Queen. Harry claimed that he had spoken to her more the past year than ever before, while Meghan praised her warmly, stating that the Queen "has always been wonderful to me".

Among the upsetting revelations made was Meghan admitting how lonely she was after joining the royal family and that her mental health deteriorated to the point where she considered self-harm and suicide. When Meghan approached senior members of the institution for support, only to be apparently told that seeking help "wouldn't be good for the institution". Harry confessed that after his wife revealed that she was feeling suicidal, he "had no idea what to do" and he went to "a very dark place as well".

Perhaps even more damaging were the allegations the couple made regarding race, with Meghan revealing that while she was pregnant with Archie, there were "concerns and conversations about how dark his skin might be when he was born". Although Meghan declined to name those who had expressed these concerns, saying "I think that would be very damaging to them", Oprah revealed the day after the interview that Harry had told her that it was not the Queen or Prince Philip.

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Murder

74

30

68

68 Isabella
Did the French queen really usurp her husband, King Edward II, to claim England as her own?

74 Who Killed Henry Darnley?
The unsolved murder of Mary, Queen of Scots' husband

78 The Sture Murders
In 1567, King Erik XIV went on a rampage, but what was the story behind this tale of madness and murder?

82 The Scandal That Ended a Dynasty
In the late 1880s, Vienna was rocked by a murder suicide at the very top of the royal family, but were things quite as they seemed?

88 Murder in the House of Romanov
Shot and stabbed by drunken revolutionaries, the murder of the Russian royal family still reverberates today

ISABELLA

Did the French queen really usurp Edward II to claim England as her own?

Written by **Jessica Leggett**

One of the most notorious figures in English history, Isabella of France has been described as a 'shadow queen', a 'rebel queen' and the 'She-Wolf of France'. The only queen to have launched a rebellion against her husband, Isabella lived in a time when female power was viewed as a threat - and she was willing to do whatever it took to fight for what was rightfully hers.

Isabella was born in Paris around 1295, the daughter of King Philip IV of France and Queen Joan I of Navarre. Like all royal princesses, she was a political pawn r marriage would secure a foreign alliance. In 1299, when Isabella was three or four, it was decided she would marry Edward of Caernarfon, King Edward I of England's heir. The betrothal was part of the Treaty of Montreuil, a peace agreement between the two countries.

The marriage took place in Boulogne on 25 January 1308, with Edward travelling across the English Channel for the wedding ceremony. At just 12 years old, Isabella was still a child while her new husband - who had succeeded his late father as king the previous year - was around 11 years her senior. As a wedding gift, Edward gave his young bride a richly illuminated psalter, which included a depiction of a queen (most likely Isabella herself) kneeling between the coats of arms of England and France.

Exactly one month after their wedding, the newlywed couple were crowned together in a joint coronation ceremony held at Westminster Abbey. Isabella had been raised to be the queen of England and the coronation should have been a joyous occasion. Yet there was one person whose presence likely soured this moment for the new queen. His name? Piers Gaveston, 1st Earl of Cornwall.

Gaveston, who had joined Edward's household while the latter was still a prince, was the king's favourite and their close relationship had sparked rumours that they were lovers.

At the coronation, it was Gaveston who carried the king's crown into the Abbey, reflecting his importance to Edward and his influence on the king. To make matters worse, at the coronation feast the king apparently showed more interest in spending time with his favourite than with his new queen.

Although Isabella was young, she was highly intelligent and she would have known exactly what was expected of her: to be a dutiful wife, a loyal queen and, one day, mother to a future king. But she would have also known how she should have been treated as a queen. Her treatment at the coronation, just one month into their reign, was an inauspicious start to her new life.

> "Edward's treatment of Isabella at the coronation, just one month into their reign, was an inauspicious start"

With Gaveston's presence and, indeed, Edward's penchant for male favourites, it is commonly assumed that Isabella endured an unhappy marriage with the king from the very beginning. However, the fact that they ultimately had four children together - Edward, John, Eleanor and Joan - suggests that this assumption is untrue.

Edward also famously saved his wife while they were paying a visit to France in 1313. During their stay, a fire broke out in their tent and Edward carried Isabella, both of them completely naked, to safety. Edward's heroic actions that night were deemed by contemporaries as an act of love.

Playing the supportive wife and queen, Isabella tolerated Gaveston and they managed to co-exist with one another. Nevertheless, Edward's relationship with Gaveston still caused issues with the English barons. These barons, led by Edward's cousin Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, opposed Gaveston's influence and power, especially because it greatly diminished their own. The situation had already been strained when Isabella first arrived in England, but the simmering tensions finally boiled over in 1311 after Edward led a failed military campaign against Scotland.

That October, 21 barons drafted the Ordinances, a series of regulations that not only restricted Edward's power but demanded that Gaveston be banished. The king accepted these demands and sent Gaveston into exile, only to have him return shortly afterwards. Infuriated, Lancaster and the barons decided to deal with Gaveston themselves once and for all.

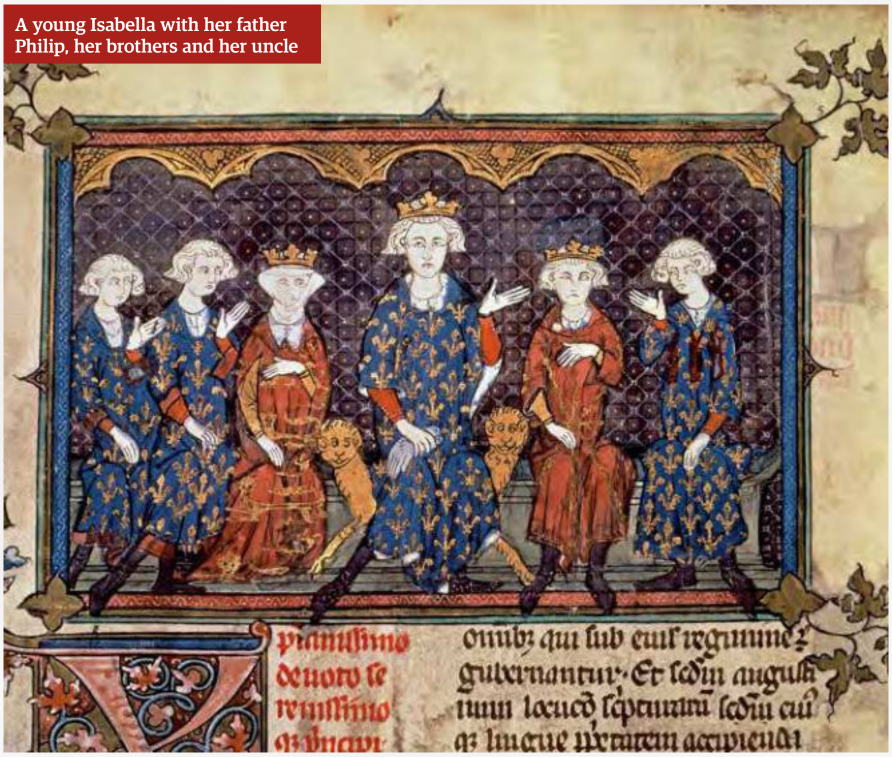
Edward, wanting to protect his favourite, fled north with Gaveston and Isabella as the barons gave chase - at this point, the queen was pregnant. The three of them ended up being separated, with Edward and Isabella heading to York while Gaveston was in Scarborough, where he was captured by the barons. Found guilty of being a traitor, Gaveston was executed on 19 June under the orders of Lancaster. Five months later, Isabella gave birth to her first child and son, Edward, at Windsor Castle.

The death of Gaveston gave Isabella the chance to enter the political arena, as she encouraged peace between her husband and the barons to avoid a civil war. However, Gaveston's death did little to bridge the growing divide between the barons and their king. Devastated over the loss of his favourite, Edward vowed to get revenge on those responsible. Isabella and Edward's aforementioned visit to France in 1313 had been made in the hope of securing the support of the queen's French relatives against the English barons.

Despite this, Edward found himself stuck after he suffered a humiliating defeat against Robert the Bruce and the Scots at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, a key victory on the road to Scottish independence. The king needed Lancaster's support to help keep England's northern borders safe, and soon enough the earl had increased his power to the point where he was effectively running the country. (Although ironically, he also turned out to be rather useless at governing.) The following year saw the emergence of the Great Famine that swept through Europe and decimated the English population, fuelling more discontent with the king.

Amid all this chaos was Isabella. With Gaveston dead, she should have assumed her rightful place by her husband's side, but unfortunately for her the king had found himself another male favourite. Hugh Despenser the Younger, as well as his father, had worked their way into becoming Edward's close advisers since Gaveston's death.

Gaveston had been a tolerable thorn in Isabella's side, but the Despensers were a much bigger problem. The younger Despenser was made royal



A young Isabella with her father Philip, her brothers and her uncle

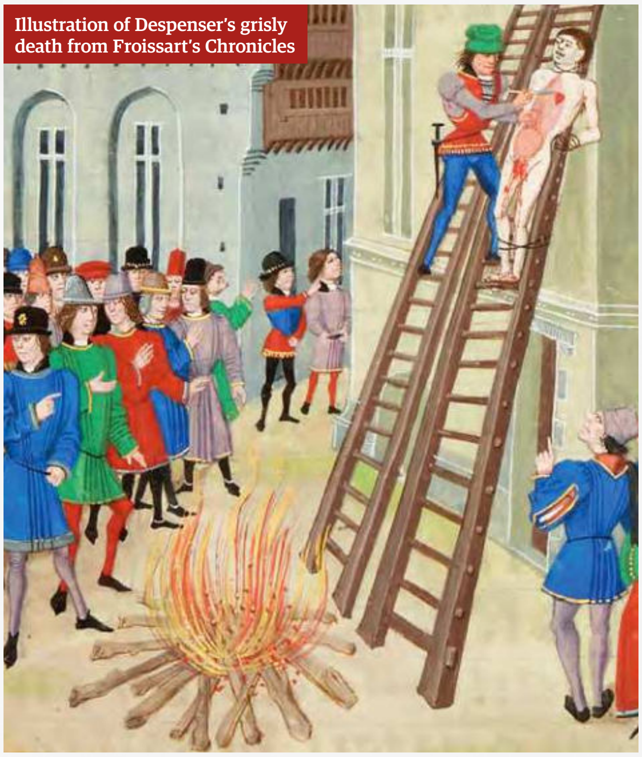


Illustration of Despenser's grisly death from Froissart's Chronicles chamberlain in 1318, a position that had previously been held by Gaveston and allowed plenty of access to the king. Again, it's believed Edward and Despenser may have been lovers.

Edward had failed to learn from his experience with Gaveston and his flagrant favouritism for the Despensers antagonised Lancaster and the barons. In 1321, they threatened the king and demanded that the Despensers be exiled. The king, too reliant on his favourites, did not want to banish them. Once again taking on a conciliatory role to prevent an outbreak of war, Isabella went down on her knees and asked her husband to banish the Despensers. The king outwardly agreed but he had every intention of bringing the Despensers back as soon as possible.

With a truce between the two factions agreed, Isabella embarked on a pilgrimage to Canterbury in October 1321. During her return to London she arrived at Leeds Castle in Kent expecting to stay there. However, the castle belonged to Baron Badlesmere, who'd joined Lancaster and his fellow rebels in opposing the king. Badlesmere's wife, Margaret de Clare, refused to let Isabella enter.

Enraged, Isabella ordered her men to force their way into the castle and, in response Margaret ordered her archers in the garrison to fire on the queen's men. For Edward, this was the perfect justification for waging war on his enemies. He argued that refusing entry to the queen and the attack on her men was an act of treason and he laid siege to the castle. Margaret was forced to surrender and she was thrown into the Tower of London alongside her children, while some of her men were also executed.

Considering that Isabella took a detour from the usual pilgrimage route to stop at Leeds Castle, it has been speculated that she may have stopped there to give her husband a reason to attack his enemies. It could have been a deliberate decision or Edward may have advised her to stay there without telling her the reason why. Regardless, the king was now in a strong enough position to recall the Despensers from exile.

Six months later, Edward secured victory at the Battle of Boroughbridge and captured his foremost enemy, Lancaster. Charged with treason, Lancaster was executed and with his death the king was finally able to rid himself of the Ordinances that had restricted his power for a decade. Edward - and the Despensers - were back in control. Unsurprisingly, the king used his newfound position of strength to pursue his enemies and exact revenge for their continued rebellion. Nobody, not even the women or children, was spared from Edward and the Despensers' wrath, much to Isabella's dismay.

The incident at Leeds Castle with Isabella had given Edward the justification he needed to go after his enemies. Yet instead of being rewarded, Isabella was further alienated from her husband. The younger Despenser did whatever he could to intervene in their relationship and limit Isabella's access to her husband, thereby weakening the possibility of her exercising any influence of her own. The queen despised and distrusted Despenser and by the end of 1322, she had made the decision to live separately from her husband, leaving him with his favourite.

Relations between England and France reached another low in 1324 over Gascony, which belonged to Edward. As the Duke of Aquitaine, Edward was supposed to pay homage to King Charles IV, Isabella's brother, but he resisted. Frustrated, Charles declared that Edward had forfeited his lands and he seized Gascony.

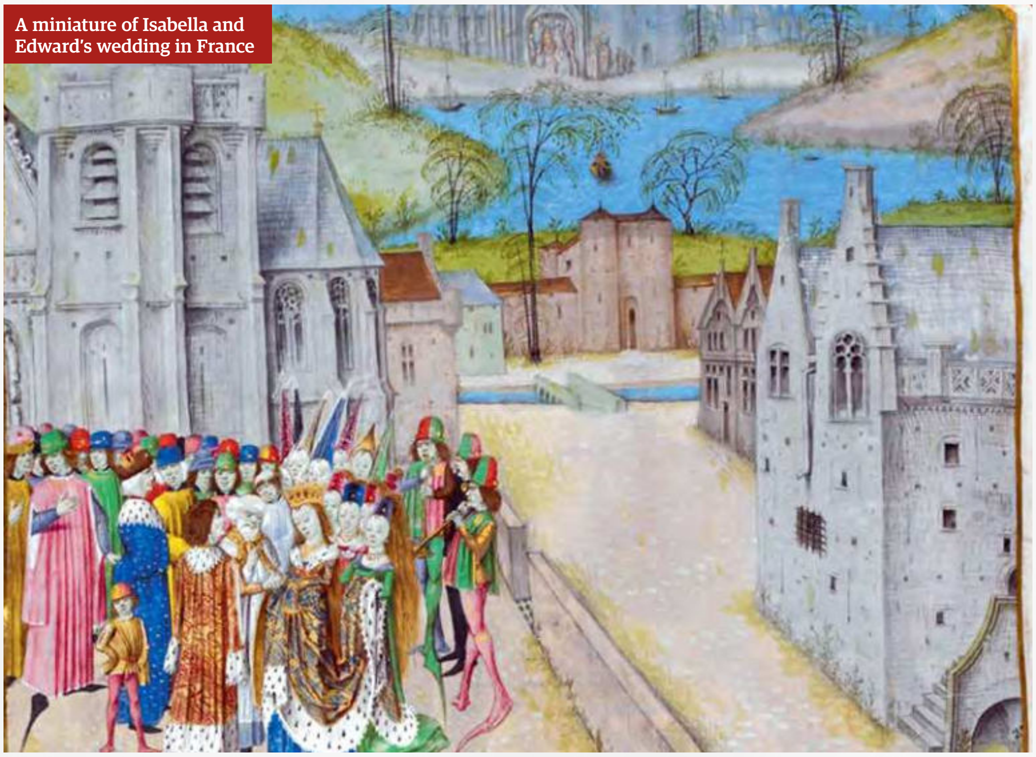
THE PATH TO WAR

During her time as regent, Isabella attempted to claim the French throne for her son Edward. Her brother, King Charles IV, died in 1328 without leaving a male heir to succeed him. His first cousin, Philip of Valois, was chosen to be the next king of France as Philip VI. However, Edward was actually Charles' nephew and nearest male relative, so why did he not inherit the French crown?

According to Salic law in France, the throne could not be inherited either by a woman or through the female line. Since Edward's claim to the French throne was through Isabella, a daughter of King Philip IV, he was excluded from the line of succession. But like his mother, Edward was not one to give up on what he saw as rightfully his.

He decided to press his claim to the French throne in 1337 after Philip confiscated his territories in France. In England, the throne could be inherited through the maternal bloodline. It was a precedent set by King Henry II, who became king in 1154 and claimed his right to the throne through his mother, Empress Matilda.

Edward's decision to fight for the French crown triggered the bloody Hundred Years' War that lasted for over a century, eventually ending in a French victory. The war left the ruling House of Plantagenet weakened in England and triggered a power struggle that led to the Wars of the Roses between the Houses of York and Lancaster - even after her death, Isabella had continued to shape English politics and history.



A miniature of Isabella and Edward's wedding in France

Edward found himself in a difficult situation, as the tensions between the Despensers and the barons had once again worsened and he felt unable to leave the country amidst the instability. He responded to Charles' seizing his territory by arresting all of the French people who were living in England, treating them as unwelcome aliens in the country. Isabella, of course, was French and this gave Despenser the ammunition he needed to take her lands and arrest her household.

It is debated whether Edward and Despenser also removed Isabella's youngest children from her custody. While it was not unusual for royal children to be relocated with other noble families, the fact that it occurred amid tensions with France and that they were placed with the Despensers, whom Isabella hated, certainly means it was possible. Either way, Despenser had made his move against the queen and for Isabella there was no going back.

With tensions between England and France reaching boiling point, Isabella was sent as an ambassador to the French court to negotiate with her brother. She was the ideal candidate, not only because she was the French king's sister, but because she had also served as an ambassador to France on several previous occasions. As she was the queen and a woman, Edward and Despenser were assured that she would obey them and remain loyal to their interests.

Arriving in Paris in March 1325, Isabella quickly secured a truce with Charles and she convinced Edward to send their son, Prince Edward, to France to pay homage to her brother. But the moment Prince Edward arrived on French soil, everything changed. Now that her son was within her control, Isabella finally had the power to negotiate with her husband and demand her rightful place by his side.

In a bold move, she publicly refused Edward's request for her to return to England with their son. Instead, she declared: "I feel that marriage is a union of a man and a woman, holding fast to the practice of a life together, and that someone has come between my husband and myself and is trying to break this bond. I declare that I will not return until this intruder is removed, but, discarding my marriage garment, shall put on the robes of widowhood and mourning until I am avenged of this Pharisee."

Isabella's speech, recorded in the chronicle Vita Edwardi Secundi, was clear - she wanted Despenser gone or she would not return. Unfortunately, Edward was by now so dependent on his favourite that he denied her request. His refusal to banish Despenser was the death knell to any chance that the king and queen had of reconciling.

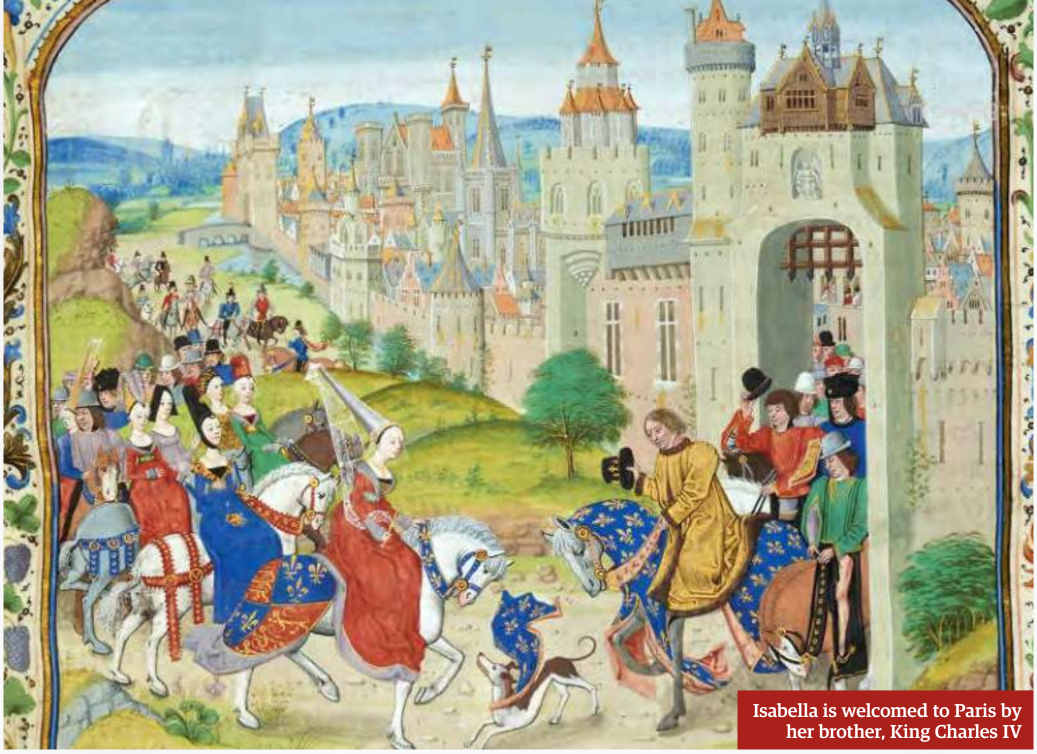
Not only was Isabella openly estranged from her husband, but rumours swirled that she was engaging in an affair with a man named Roger Mortimer. A soldier and a politician who had openly rebelled against Edward, Mortimer had been imprisoned in the Tower of London in 1322 for his revolt, before he managed to escape and flee to France in exile with other rebels.

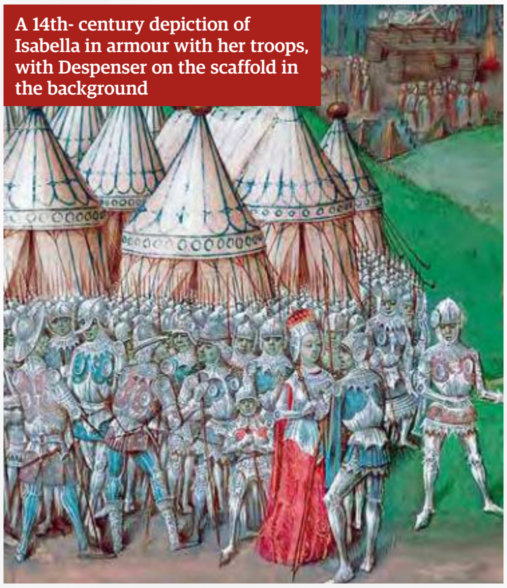
Did Isabella and Mortimer have an affair? Nobody knows for sure, with little evidence to prove or disprove their relationship. However, it is clear that their partnership was mutually beneficial. Mortimer still opposed Edward's rule and he was capable of leading an invasion of English shores.

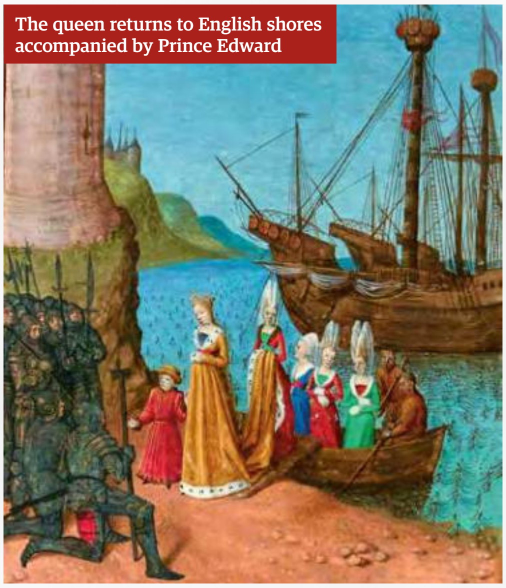
As for Isabella, since Edward would not rid himself of Despenser then she would, even if that meant deposing her husband in favour of their son. By positioning herself as a widow whose marriage had come to an end because of Despenser, Isabella had set the stage to justify both her decision to remain in France, under her brother's protection, and to remove an anointed king from his throne. Furthermore, the welfare and peace of the kingdom were at stake.

In a politically shrewd move, Isabella arranged for her son's betrothal to his second cousin, Philippa of Hainault. For his daughter's dowry, William, Count of Hainault, provided the troops and ships that were crucial for Isabella and Mortimer's plot to overthrow Edward. With their forces, Isabella and Mortimer set sail on 22 September 1326, landing in England two days later.

As Isabella, dressed in widow's clothes, and Mortimer progressed inland their supporters grew, buoyed by the promise that the queen would remove her tyrannous husband and install their son as the new king. Along the way, they were joined by the Earl of Norfolk and the Henry, Earl of Lancaster, the brother of the previous earl. The elder Despenser was captured during Isabella and Mortimer's siege of Bristol and later executed.


Isabella is welcomed to Paris by her brother, King Charles IV


A 14th- century depiction of Isabella in armour with her troops, with Despenser on the scaffold in the background


The queen returns to English shores accompanied by Prince Edward

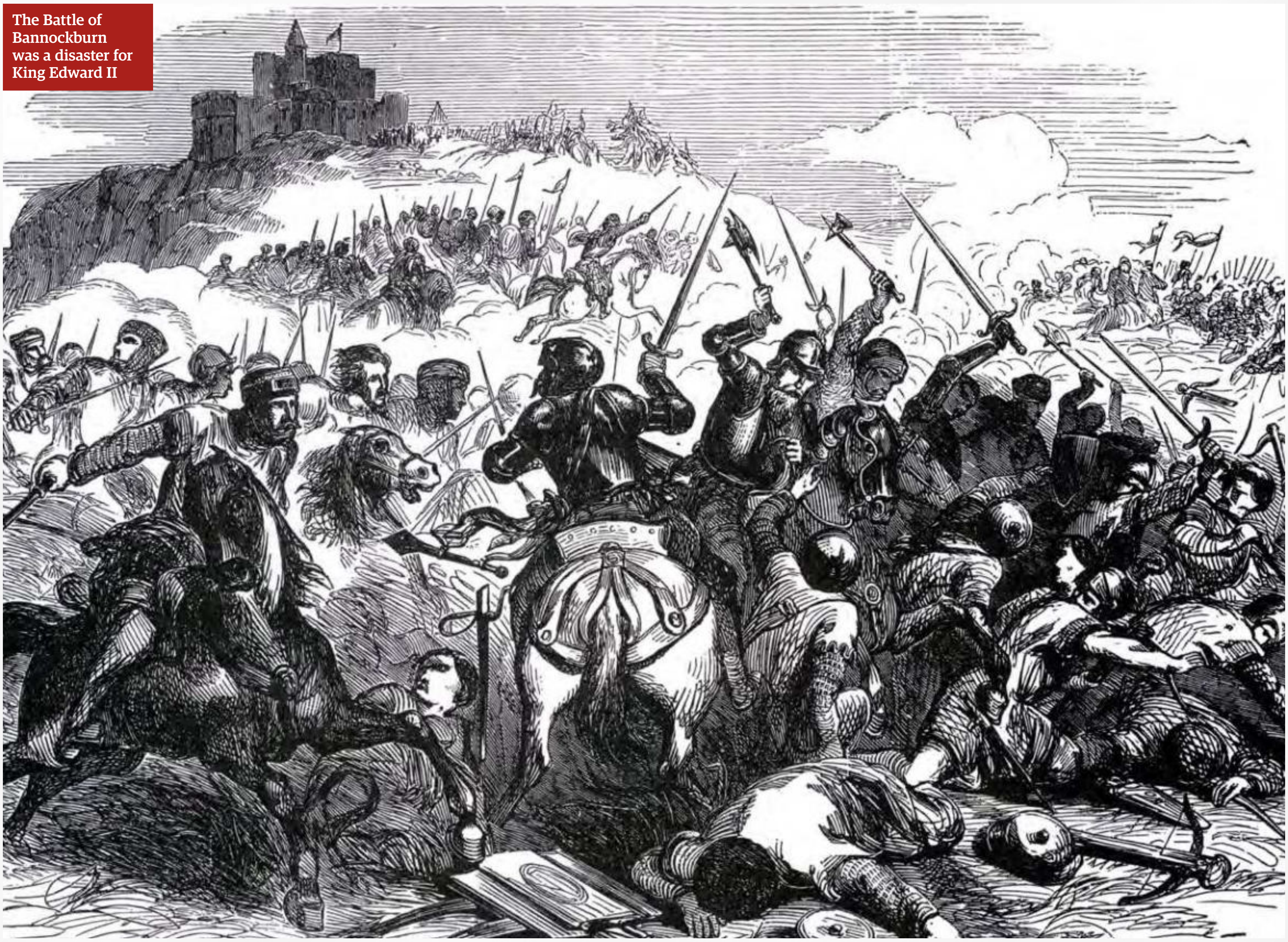
Realising that their support had dissipated, Edward and Despenser went on the run but they were finally captured in Wales on 16 November. With Despenser at her mercy, Isabella took her revenge on the man who had actively sidelined her and sentenced him to death. Despenser's end certainly reflected Isabella's hatred for him as he was dragged through the streets naked before he was hanged, drawn and quartered. As for Edward, he was placed in Lancaster's custody while his fate was decided.

In January 1327, Parliament declared that Edward had to abdicate his throne in favour of his 14-year-old son Prince Edward. Forced to relinquish his crown, Edward supposedly wept as he signed his abdication to confirm the legality of his deposition, becoming the first anointed king to lose his throne in over 300 years. On the 25th, Edward III became king of England and his coronation was held one week later.

Since the new king was still a minor, he needed a regency council to run the country on his behalf until he could assume his personal rule. Although Isabella and Mortimer were not members of the regency council, they were controlling it behind the scenes as the ones wielding the real power.

Meanwhile, Edward II - who had remained in custody ever since his forced abdication - died at Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire on 21 September 1327. While he was alive, he remained a very real threat to the new regime and there had been several failed attempts to rescue him from his imprisonment. Even so, whether Isabella or Mortimer ordered his death cannot be said for certain and this is still debated today. Another theory suggests that Edward may have escaped in disguise and fled to Europe.

Isabella and Mortimer had removed a disastrous and inept king. But, in an ironic twist, they began indulging in the same behaviour that Edward and Despenser had been loathed for. With their new power, they began awarding themselves lands and accumulating wealth from the royal treasury to fund their extravagant lifestyle.



The Battle of Bannockburn was a disaster for King Edward II

“In an ironic twist, Isabella and Mortimer began indulging in the same behaviour that Edward and Despenser had been loathed for”

Aside from the lavish spending, Isabella and Mortimer became unpopular for reaching a peace agreement with Scotland. The wars with Scotland during Edward II's reign had been both costly and unsuccessful and Isabella wanted to bring the conflict to an end. The Treaty of Northampton, signed in 1328, recognised Robert the Bruce as king of Scotland as well as Scotland's independence.

While concluding a war peacefully would usually be seen as a diplomatic triumph, Isabella and Mortimer's agreement with Scotland caused outrage in England, with the nobles considering it shameful and humiliating. Isabella, who had been hailed by some as a heroine who had saved the nation from her husband, found herself subject to the very same hatred that had once been directed at him.

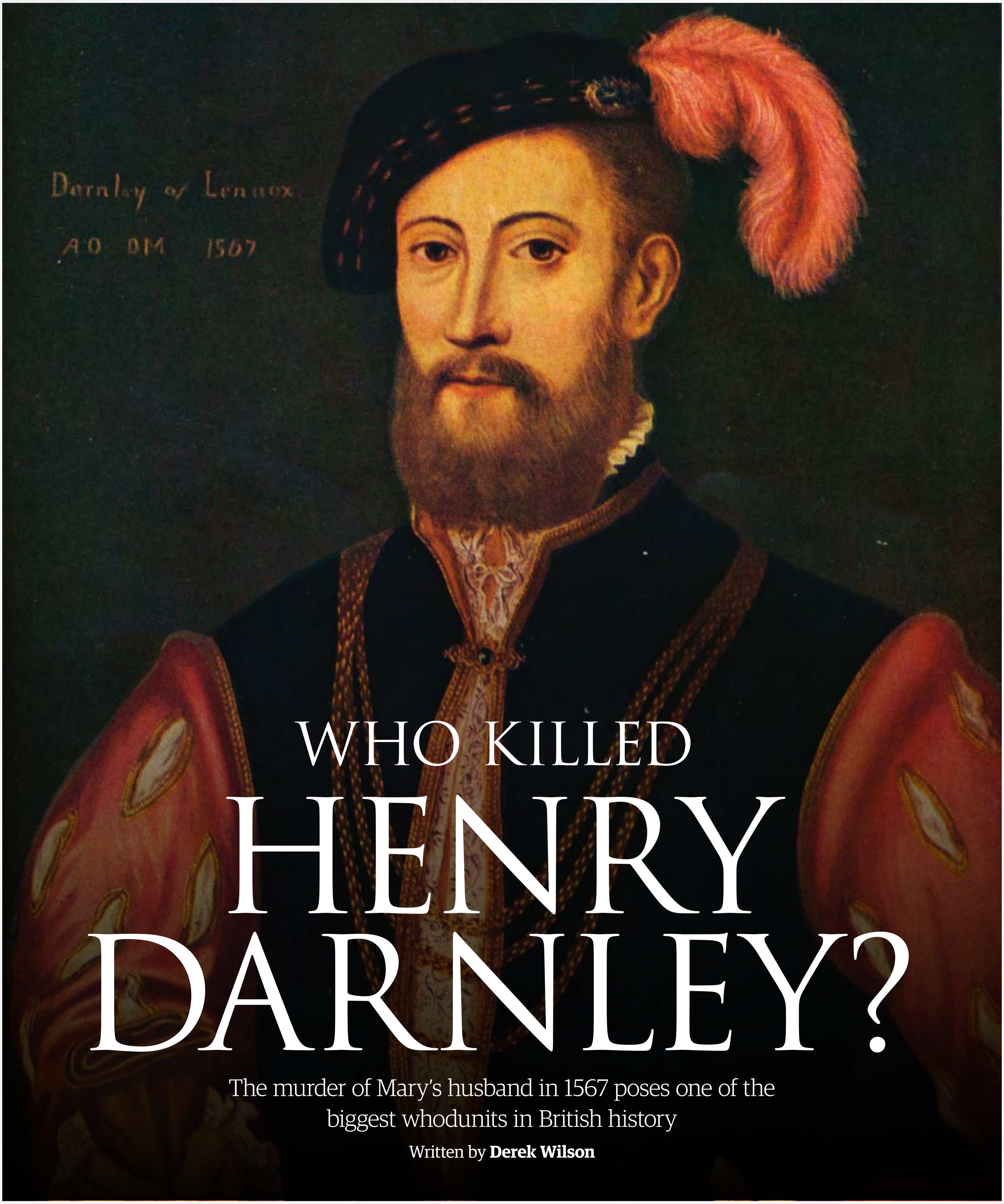
Edward III himself had become increasingly frustrated with his mother and Mortimer's continued hold on power. He had married Philippa in 1328 and in June 1330 she had given birth to their first child and son, Edward of Woodstock. Now 17 and with his own heir, Edward III was ready to take control of his kingdom.

Realising that her son was turning against her, Isabella moved to Nottingham Castle with Mortimer and their men for protection. However, on 19 October Edward's troops successfully entered the castle through a secret tunnel and Mortimer was arrested. After just four years, Isabella's regency had come to an ignominious end.

Mortimer was hanged at Tyburn for the murder of Edward II, as well as usurping the king's power. Isabella was spared the same fate and instead she was placed under house arrest and forced to give up all the lands and money that she had granted herself during the regency. However, she was not kept in custody for long.

Although she had lost her grip on power and never entered the political arena again, Isabella was able to retire in comfort and she lived luxuriously, spending much of her time at Castle Rising in Norfolk. Remaining an influential figure at the English court, her son even provided her with an annual income of £3000, which was later increased to £4500. Isabella died at Hertford Castle on 22 August 1358 and was buried in Newgate.

There is no denying that Isabella was a controversial figure and she remains so to this day. Her rebellion against Edward II, the mysterious circumstances surrounding his death as well as her short time as regent have all tainted her reputation, turning her into a traitor. While Isabella was far from perfect and she made mistakes, it is worth remembering that she was also a formidable woman whose bravery changed the course of English history forever.


Darnley of Lenox
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WHO KILLED HENRY DARNLEY?

The murder of Mary's husband in 1567 poses one of the biggest whodunits in British history

Written by **Derek Wilson**

In the early hours of 10 February 1567, a violent explosion ripped through the air in the area of Edinburgh's Cowgate. Those who rushed to the scene discovered that the provost's lodging of the church of St Mary in the Fields (Kirk o' Fields) had been reduced to a pile of rubble. That was terrible enough, but when people scoured the ruins in search of survivors, they came upon something much more sinister.

The church complex was adjacent to the city wall. In an orchard beyond the boundary, some 14 metres from the church, lay two bodies - one was that of Henry Darnley, husband of Mary, Queen of Scots. Had the royal consort and his body servant, William Taylor, been killed by the blast that had hurled them into the air? No, there were no marks or tears on their nightshirts that would certainly have been present if they had been killed in the explosion. Nor did the bodies show any other signs of violence. Further search of the area in the winter dawn produced a rope, a chair, a furred cloak and a dagger. This, in brief, describes the crime scene at Kirk o' Fields. The mystery it presented might have taxed the deductive powers of Sherlock Holmes. It has certainly produced many 'solutions' over the last four and a half centuries.

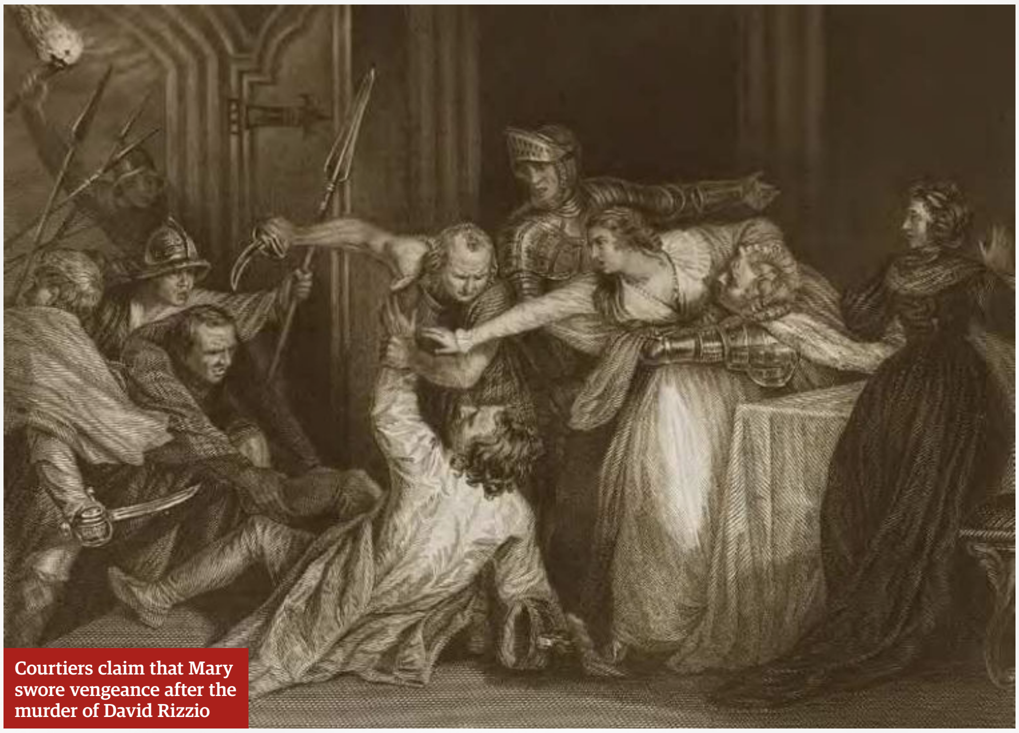
The first question to ask, and the one with which all Edinburgh was buzzing within hours, was 'cui bono'? This legal maxim, which translates as 'who benefits', proposes that the perpetrator of a crime is someone who stands to gain from it, enabling investigators to draw up a list of suspects. In seeking to discover who had reason to want Darnley dead, we need to consider the events preceding the murder.

Having fallen madly in love with Darnley two years before, Mary had married him in July 1565. It was a disaster; the handsome Darnley quickly flipped from the charming flirt to a controling, power-hungry husband. While Mary resisted his demands to grant him the Crown Matrimonial - meaning that he could remain king for life, even in the event of Mary's death - he became increasingly unstable and jealous. In May 1566, Darnley arranged the brutal slaughter of one of Mary's closest friends and advisers, Italian-born David Rizzio. Stabbed to death in front of her eyes, Rizzio's murder was the last straw for the heavily pregnant queen.

> "The handsome darnley quickly flipped from the charming flirt to power-hungry"

It had been less than a year since Mary had witnessed the vicious attack on Rizzio, and her attendants had heard her utter the word 'revenge'. However, over the ensuing weeks she had given the impression that she and her husband were reconciled. In June 1566, the queen gave birth to a son, the future James VI. Darnley was not present and only deigned to pay her a fleeting visit.

Image Source • Getty Images.



Courtiers claim that Mary swore vengeance after the murder of David Rizzio

Image Source • Getty Images.

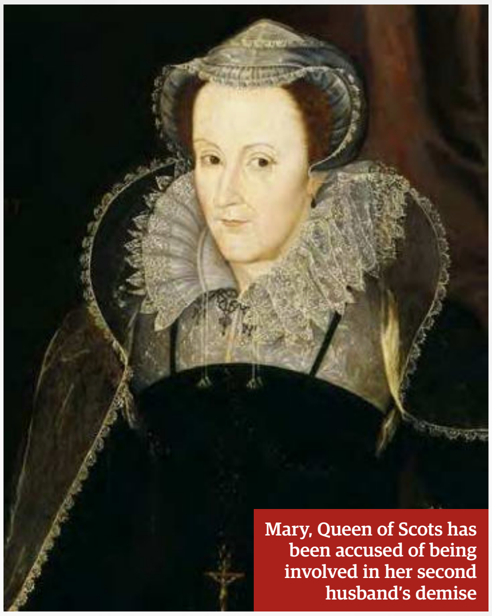
In the autumn she made a long journey on horseback to visit Hermitage Castle where her friend James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, lay ill, having been wounded in a border skirmish. Soon afterwards, Mary herself fell very seriously ill. She was close to death and, in agony of mind as well as body, she longed for it.

This scare gave the 'Darnley problem' a new political urgency. The consort had always wanted to be declared king in his own right and it was obvious that, if Mary died, he would seek to be regent during the minority of James VI and lay claim to greater powers than he currently enjoyed. Darnley did, in fact, at this juncture make further efforts to browbeat his wife. Mary and her councillors debated what should be done, considering - and rejecting - the possibility of divorce. An approach was made to Queen Elizabeth suggesting that, if Mary died, young James would be sent into England and brought up at the English court. Did Mary and her advisers also discuss a more sinister solution to the Darnley problem?

Darnley cannot have been ignorant of the council's hostility. He may even have suspected that something drastic was being planned - he certainly took great care of his security. His absence from his son's christening in December may have been more than an act of petulance. Certainly, in early January, he travelled to the home of his father, the Earl of Lennox, near Glasgow. Here, surrounded by hundreds of armed family retainers, he felt safe. Safe but not well. It was now Darnley's turn to fall ill - with syphilis. Yet there may have been more to his withdrawal from Edinburgh. Reports reached the Scottish queen that her husband planned to seize the prince, rule in his name and have Mary locked up. So thick was the air with plots and rumours of plots that it is impossible, now, to separate real conspiracy from fearful imagination.

With the situation becoming unbearably tense, the queen took the initiative. She travelled to Glasgow on 22 January 1567, taking care to be protected by a large armed guard. She went to her husband's bedside, aiming to get him away from his home territory and lodge him somewhere where he could be watched 24/7 and, if necessary, restrained. But was this all she had in mind? Darnley had his suspicions and it took all the queen's wiles, over several days, to persuade him to ride back with her. As to lodging, this seems to have been a compromise arrangement. He refused to return to Holyrood, partly for reasons of security and partly through vanity - his syphilis had brought him out in sores and postules and he did not wish to be seen in that condition. Thus, he chose Kirk o' Fields, on the edge of the city, where his treatment could be concluded with immersion in foul-smelling sulphurous baths. Darnley also felt secure in the knowledge that the chosen house belonged to Robert Balfour, brother of his friend Sir James Balfour. What he did not know was that the Balfours had changed sides. And, by the way, James Balfour was in charge of ordering gunpowder for the castle ordnance.

Darnley took up residence on 1 February. Mary remained at Holyrood but visited her husband frequently and made herself so agreeable to him that he could write to his father on the 7th that she "doth use herself like a natural and loving wife". His condition improved steadily and the disfiguring



Mary, Queen of Scots has been accused of being involved in her second husband's demise

Above Image Source • Public Domain; National Portrait Gallery, NPG 429.

"If the queen is exonerated, suspicion falls on a syndicate of noble councillors"

marks had so far disappeared that he could declare that he would return to the palace (about ten minutes' walk away) on the 10th. So, on the evening of the 9th the queen arrived with a bevy of courtiers in festive mood, all come to celebrate the invalid's recovery. Darnley pressed his wife to stay the night but she declined on the grounds that she had promised to attend the wedding festivities of two of her attendants. Thus, at around 11 o'clock, she took her leave. By this time, the cellar was well stocked with gunpowder.

So, was Mary Stuart up to her neck in the plot to murder her husband? Was she playing a deadly duplicitous game? She certainly had motive enough to want Darnley out of the way. She had opportunity, having engineered the victim's presence at Kirk o' Fields. And she had the means - not to do the job herself, but to fire up her noble councillors to do the dirty work for her. And she may have had yet another incentive - in the weeks and months that followed, observers were accusing her of a crime passionelle.

Working backwards from what followed after, they deduced that the queen had taken another lover, James Hepburn, Lord Bothwell. When, within three months of Darnley's death, Mary and Bothwell were married, people recalled the queen's visit to Hermitage Castle and concluded that by then they had become more than just good friends. What was the reason for the long ride through the border country, if not to plan the removal of the only obstacle to their happy union? The couple's post-murder behaviour was certainly ill-advised, but did it prove Mary's involvement in premeditated murder? No one in the whispering gallery of the court seems to have seen the Bothwell match coming before early spring of 1567.

And there is one other piece of evidence that stubbornly refuses to fit in with the theory that Mary was the driving force behind 'murder most foul'. It concerns Anglo-Scottish diplomacy at the highest level. Back in 1560, the Treaty of Edinburgh had put an end to Anglo-French rivalry in Scotland by ordering the removal of foreign troops from Scottish soil and the rejection of the sovereignty claims that had lain at the root of the conflict between the rulers north and south of Hadrian's Wall for generations. Mary, at that time married to the French dauphin, had always insisted that Elizabeth had been bastardised by her father, that his deathbed will was a forgery, and that, therefore, she was Henry VIII's closest relation. On her heraldic shield she quartered the arms of all three countries. She was furious at being forced to abandon her claim to Elizabeth's crown. Mary never accepted the Treaty of Edinburgh and kept her eyes fixed on establishing rule over the two kingdoms - either for herself or for her son. Her rival's disinclination to marry kept alive her hopes and she kept up a personal correspondence with her sister monarch.

It paid off. In 1566, Elizabeth, ceaselessly badgered by her ministers to secure the succession, proposed a new Anglo-Scottish treaty acknowledging Mary's claim as her own heir, subject to certain conditions. Mary joyfully accepted the terms and ordered her reply to be carried back to London. The date was 8 February 1567. The Kirk o' Fields atrocity finally and irrevocably torpedoed her dynastic dreams. Even if she had been a party to the plot, would she have allowed it to go ahead with so much at stake? Mary's immediate reaction to news of her husband's murder was shock horror, partly because she feared (or claimed to fear) that she might have been an intended victim. She offered a massive reward for information and even a pardon to any conspirator who would inform on his accomplices. Genuine response or well-rehearsed performance?

If the queen is exonerated, suspicion falls on a syndicate of her noble councillors, acting without her knowledge. Who were they; what were their motives; what did they stand to gain from this atrocity? The significant political players were three Ms: Moray, Morton and Maitland. James Stewart, Earl of Moray, was an illegitimate son of James V and, therefore, Mary's half-brother. Before the Darnley marriage he was the queen's most trusted adviser. Thereafter, he was sidelined. As a Protestant, he hated Darnley's pro-Catholic policies and had been forced to spend several months as an exile in England in 1565-66.

James Douglas, Earl of Morton, was another pro-English Protestant. He had been Mary's Lord Chancellor but had become implicated in the Rizzio murder that had been instigated by Darnley, who subsequently changed sides and dumped his co-conspirators. Morton, too, had taken refuge south of the border and only returned early in 1567. William Maitland was Mary's trusted secretary and ambassador to the English court. He, too, had been caught up in the Rizzio murder but had not forfeited Mary's trust. He was devoted to his mistress and to the English alliance and he saw that Darnley was the obstacle to the peace and security of the queen and the realm.

And then there is Bothwell. He was the archetypal philanderer/adventurer who, in the language of a later era, would have been called a 'cad'. In his 20s he had married a Norwegian noblewoman and swiftly run through her fortune. In 1566 he had married (presumably bigamously) Jean Gordon, daughter of the earl of Huntly. Yet within months this Scottish Lothario was practising his charms on the queen herself with evident success - within days, Bothwell was being identified as the principal agent of Darnley's murder. While the Earl of Lennox demanded a trial for Bothwell, activists went about the capital posting placards denouncing Bothwell. But the suspect was - for the time being, at least - secure.

Among the political leaders of the nation there was a general sense of relief that Darnley was no more. Whatever Morton and Maitland knew, they gave Bothwell their open support and the queen was rapidly coming under his spell. Little did she know, she had jumped from the frying pan and into the fire. Bothwell was as much a braggart and bully as Darnley but she could not or would not see it. She loaded him with honours and consented to Lennox's demand for a trial before the privy council. It took place on 12 April and was a travesty of justice. Edinburgh was swarming with the armed retainers of Bothwell and others who had good reason for not wanting the truth to come out. Lennox and his supporters did not dare enter the city to present their evidence. The 'not guilty' verdict was a foregone conclusion.

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So, we have our list of suspects. One of them was acquitted in a legal process that does not bear examination. All of them have come before the bar of public opinion, both in their own day and over the intervening centuries. None of the individuals at the centre of the affair (with the exception of Darnley's family) made a serious attempt to unravel the Kirk o' Fields mystery either because they were, in one way or another, involved or because they shared the conviction that ridding the world of Henry Darnley was a wholly laudable act that didn't justify solving.

One reason why the murder remains a mystery is that no proper inquest was ever carried out. This means that not only do we not know whodunnit, but we also don't know how it was done. What can we, therefore, deduce about the extraordinary events of 10 February 1567?

Fact 1: Several people escaped from the building. Detonating a bomb in someone's house is not a fail-safe way of killing the intended victim. There were several residents in the provost's lodging that night, mostly servants. Apart from Darnley and Taylor, it appears that only two others died in the blast. The perpetrators must have known that there was a chance Darnley would survive and that a failed attempt would have been worse than no attempt at all. It would actually have strengthened Darnley's position, putting him on his guard and instigating a vigorous search for his attackers.

Fact 2: Darnley and Taylor were murdered before or after the explosion. Since there were no marks on their bodies it was assumed at the time - probably correctly - that both men had been smothered or strangled.

Fact 3: The location of the bodies was wrong. It is very unlikely that, amid all the falling rubble, they would have been thrown clear and right over the city wall.

Fact 4: An odd assortment of items were found at the site with the bodies - a chair, a rope, a knife and a cloak.

Fact 5: There were witnesses. Two women living in houses nearby were roused by the bang, looked out and saw a group of well-dressed men of obvious rank hurrying past. When they were examined at Bothwell's trial, they were not pressed for details and were quickly dismissed as blabbing fools, an act that has a distinct odour of fish!

We can juggle these facts, as chroniclers have over the centuries, and come up with a variety of scenarios. The two men escaped but were tracked down and killed in the garden. The criminals intended to lynch Darnley - hence the chair and rope - but had to improvise another means of murder at the last moment. The victims were despatched in their chamber, then carried to the place where they were found. The explosion was merely a diversion enabling the culprits to do the deed and then escape in the confusion.

None of these 'solutions' deal satisfactorily with all the known facts. Perhaps it is that that provides, if not the solution, at least a fuller explanation. None of the tidy versions make sense because there was nothing tidy about this desperate deed. The original plan was botched. Once the slow fuse had been lit in the cellar, it would only take one detail to go awry for hurried or panicked improvisation to take over. The Kirk o' Fields mystery remains just that - a mystery, and if we believe we can tie up all the loose ends, we deceive ourselves. What matters more from a historian's point of view are the consequences. What should have been the end of Mary Stuart's problems was, in fact, their beginning. The Kirk o' Fields atrocity and Mary's reaction to it destroyed her credibility in the eyes of her people and her government. With her reputation in tatters, the path from Darnley's murder to the queen's abdication was short and slippery, as she was forced to relinquish her throne just five months after his death.

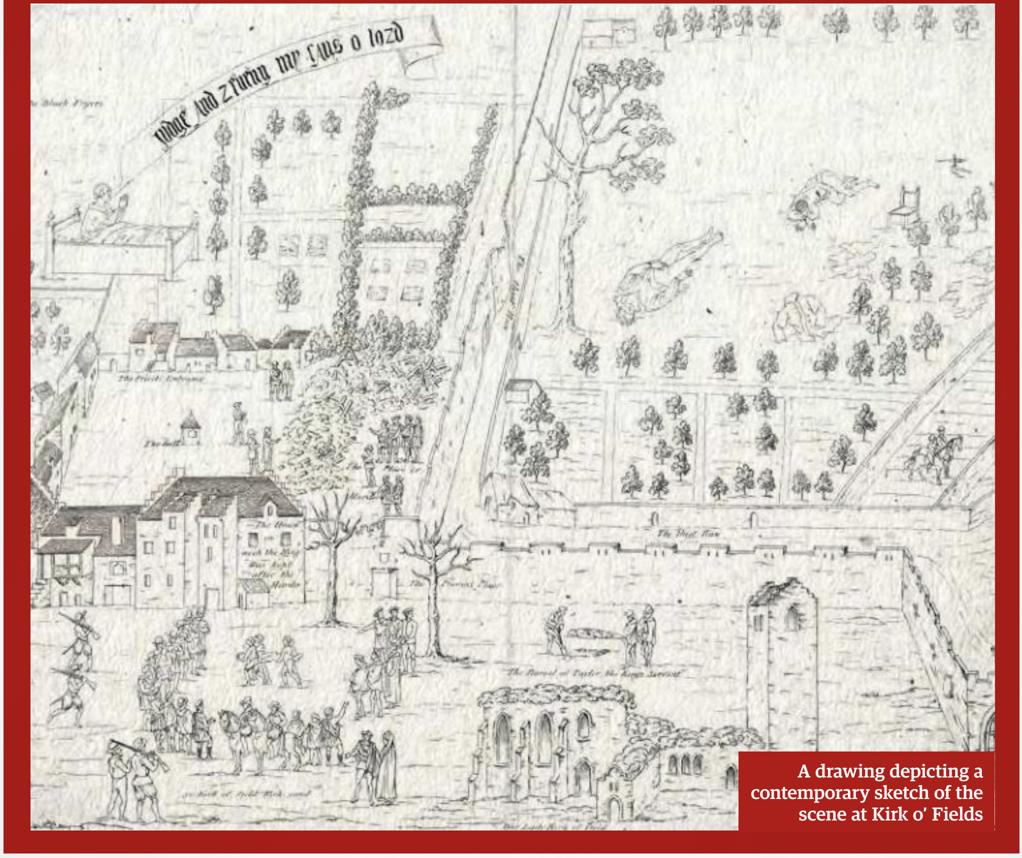
Anglo-Scottish hostilities dated back centuries

DRAWING OF A MURDER

The sketch sent to Cecil in the aftermath of the murder was something between a groundplan, a graphic narrative and a political statement. It mapped out the buildings - the church and the adjacent houses. It showed their relationship to the nearby streets and the city wall.

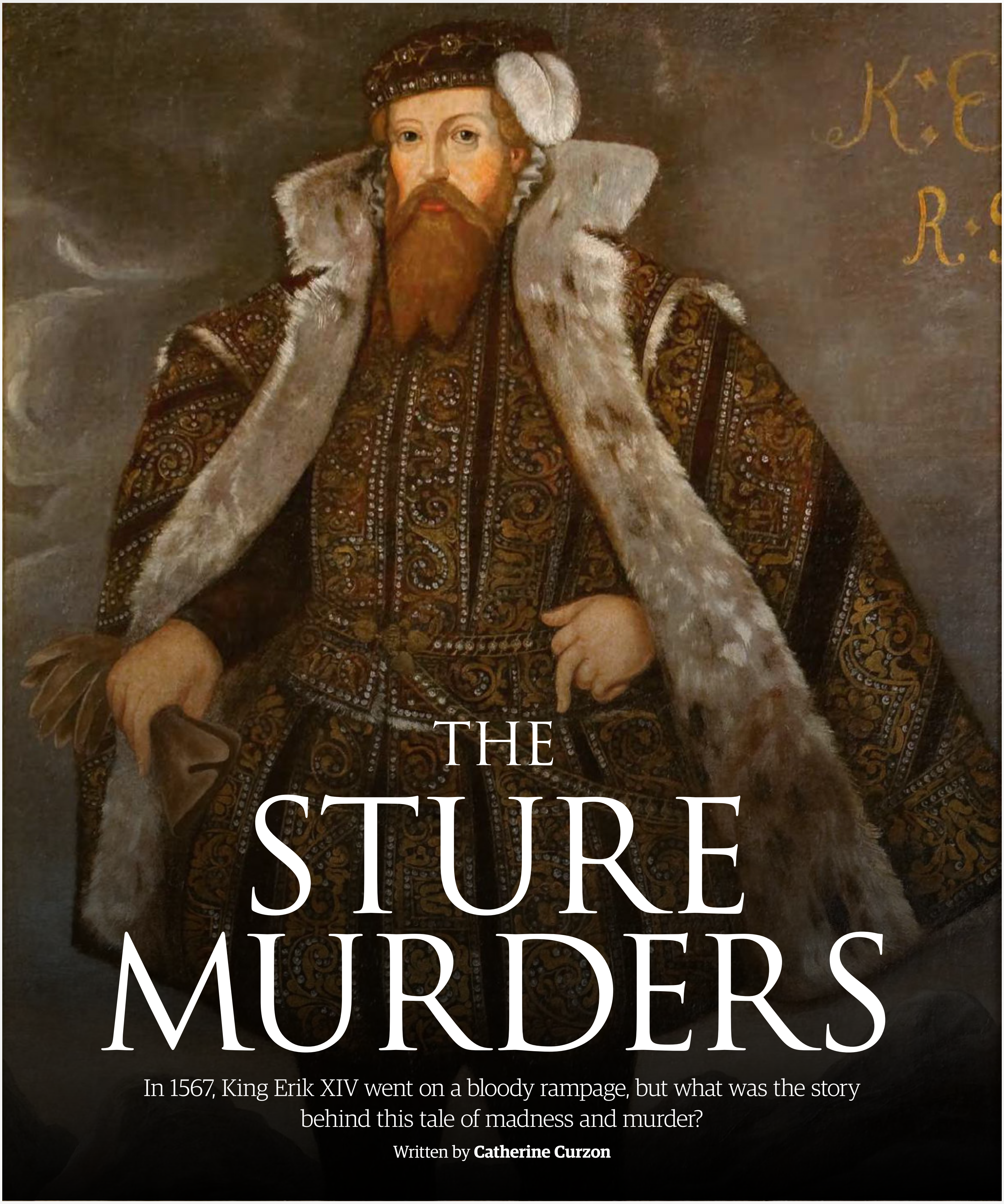
The pile of debris that was the provost's lodging is clearly shown. A crowd watches as Darnley's body is carried away but no onlookers are present at his burial. A third of the picture is taken up with the scene in the orchard where the two bodies are depicted much larger than all the other figures.

To the right, a group of horsemen appear - presumably the conspirators making their escape. Filling the top left-hand corner there is a poignant vignette of Darnley's infant son, the future James VI, sitting up in his cot and praying, "Judge and avenge my cause, O Lord." The picture conveys different aspects of the tragedy. While the unlamented Darnley is laid to rest in one corner, his now fatherless child cries for revenge - he was, of course, too young to do any such thing. Whatever contemporary Scots felt about the removal of Darnley, there is no doubting that the manner of his death made an impact on them all.


iudge and avenge my caus o lord
The Black Fryers
The Friers Entrance
The Thief Raw
The Burial of Taylor the Kings Servant

A drawing depicting a contemporary sketch of the scene at Kirk o' Fields

Image Source • Alamy.



THE STURE MURDERS

In 1567, King Erik XIV went on a bloody rampage, but what was the story behind this tale of madness and murder?

Written by **Catherine Curzon**

On 24 May 1567, a king crept from his opulent chambers and made his way through the magnificent castle that was his home, a knife clutched in his hand. Hours later, six people lay dead, among them three members of one of Sweden's most noble families and the deranged monarch's loyal tutor. It was a day that changed the life of Erik XIV of Sweden, and the country he ruled, forever.

Erik was born in 1533 to Gustav I, the King of Sweden, and Catherine of Saxe-Lauenburg, who died when her son was still in infancy. As heir to the throne Erik proved a popular and intelligent young man, but he was always wilful. He knew his own mind on all matters, even attempting without any success to court the future Queen Elizabeth I and Mary, Queen of Scots. Unsurprisingly, when he came to the throne in 1560, Erik had big plans for the land he had inherited.

In Erik's ambitious expansion plans, he saw Sweden as a superpower, dominating the Scandinavian and Baltic states. Although he didn't live to see his ambitions become a reality, the policies that Erik put in place were in fact instrumental in cementing the Swedish crown's dominance for years after his death. At home, Erik's domestic upheavals were to prove controversial and he came into conflict with the ruling classes of Sweden, including members of his own family.

Erik's plans to expand the reach of Sweden's territory were not achievable unless he was willing to go to war, and Erik confirmed his reputation as an iron fisted leader by leading his troops from the front. Established protocol in Sweden was for a Privy Council made up nobles to assume control of the country in the absence of the king, but the suspicious Erik didn't like this idea at all. Instead, he dismissed the Privy Councillors and awarded controlling powers to his most trusted advisor and long-time secretary, Jöran Persson. Not content with this radical move, he dismissed all nobles who held positions in the high court and gave Persson the office of senior prosecutor too. This meant that Erik and Persson, who had once been his father's secretary too, now held sole sway over the nation and between them, they went to war on the nobility.

Of course, war didn't come cheap. As the country's coffers felt the strain of paying for his pricey military forays, Erik turned to the nobility to meet the cost. Why should they, they asked, when he had dismissed them from office without a moment's thought? Always suspicious, Erik convinced himself that the reluctant courtiers were unwilling to part with their cash not because they were disgruntled with their treatment, but because they were traitors. Hundreds of people were dragged into the torture chambers of Sweden's castles to face interrogation, with over 300 people sentenced to death in just five years. Although most of these sentences were never carried out, the damage to the king's reputation was immense.

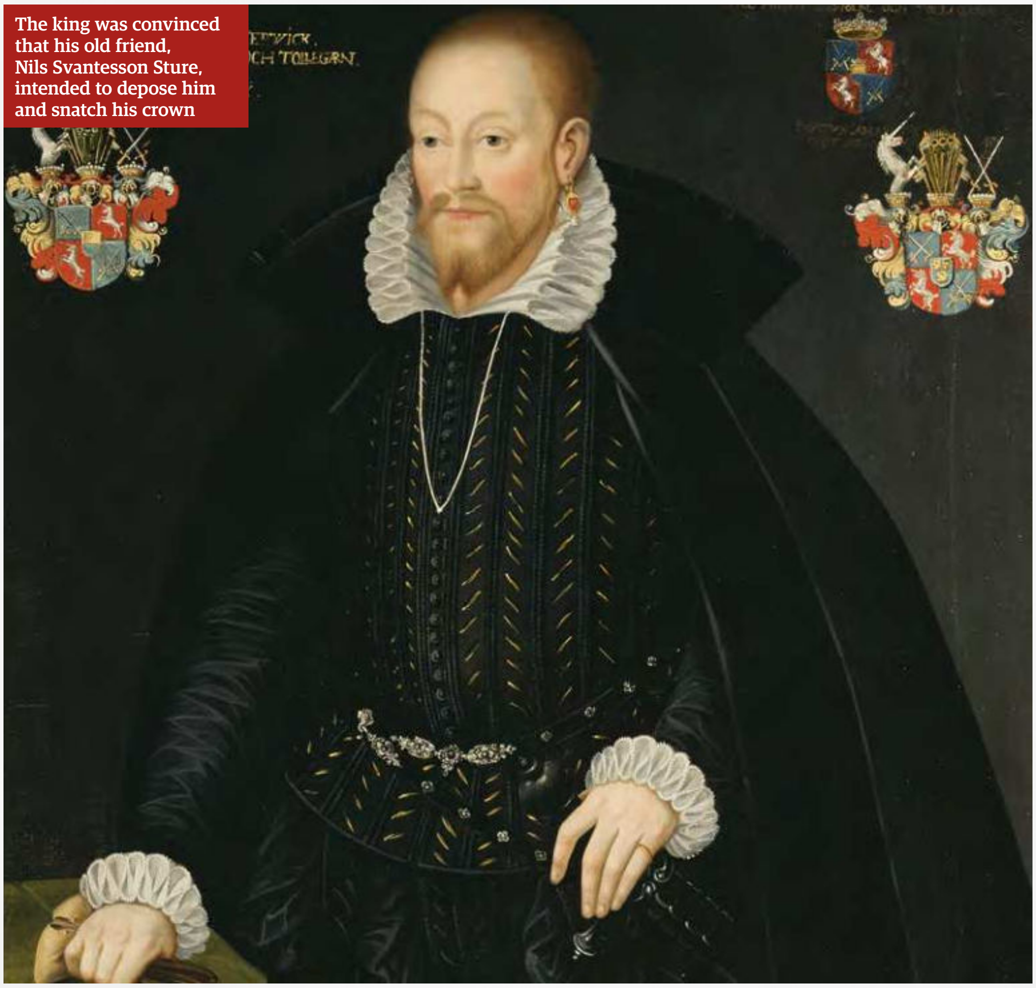
Among those sentenced to death was one man whom Erik loathed above all others. He was Nils Svantesson Sture and though he had been loyal to the king and fought tirelessly on his behalf, Erik was convinced that Sture's intentions were evil. The suspicious monarch often looked to astrologers for guidance and when one warned of evil influences close to the throne who intended to snatch the crown, Erik's eye settled on Sture. Could this be the man, he wondered, who might shake his hand while stabbing him in the back?

Eventually, Erik's paranoia about Sture became so consuming that he had the loyal courtier arrested for his imagined conspiracy to usurp the Swedish throne. Sture might have fought for his country, Erik pointed out, but he had been wounded and in the view of the increasing mentally deranged king, this was enough to raise a question mark over his loyalty. At worst the wounding might have been deliberate. At best, Sture was not fit for duty but either way, he was not about to depose the king.

Sture became just the latest in a long line of nobles to be sentenced to death. In fact, death sentences were normal in Sweden in the 1560s, as torture could only be used on those who had already received a sentence of execution. Although the majority of those who were due to die saw their punishments commuted, Erik's personal and entirely unreasonable hatred of Sture no doubt led the unfortunate noble to believe that he wouldn't be quite so fortunate. In fact, he was in for a surprise and Erik did indeed reduce the sentence of death for Sture's imagined transgressions down to one of public humiliation. The influential, wealthy and powerful Sture was dragged from his prison and sat upon the back of a horse that had seen better days, a crown made of straw placed upon his head. This pitiful mockery of a king was then driven through the streets of Stockholm, the nation's capital, before a crowd of thousands.

And then, out of nowhere, it seemed to be business as usual. Sture had no sooner endured his public humiliation than he was once again a trusted courtier of the king. Erik dispatched Sture off to Lorraine, where he was under instructions to discuss a possible marriage between the paranoid king and Princess Renata. The marriage never came to pass, but on the eve of Sture's departure from Sweden, events took place that would change the path of his life and cut it devastatingly short.

Sture attended a farewell party that was thrown on his behalf by a group of disenfranchised nobles. What was discussed has been lost to history but Erik was certain that the attendees were formulating a conspiracy against him. He was particularly concerned to learn that Sture's father, Svante Sture, had been present, for in his tormented mind this meant that both the old and young generations were ranked against him. It was a conspiracy that he had to cut off before it went any further.


The king was convinced that his old friend, Nils Svantesson Sture, intended to depose him and snatch his crown

With no wife, Erik had no heir and he was certain now that he had made a mistake in entrusting his marriage negotiations to Sture. After all, if Sture intended to stage a coup and claim the throne, the last thing he would want was an heir to complicate matters. Once Erik heard that the marriage negotiations in Lorraine had stalled, he thought it far more likely that Sture had deliberately scuppered them to protect his own ambitions.

While Sture was making his unsuccessful representations on behalf of Erik, the king was busy sanctioning yet more torture, this time of members of the royal household. One of the unfortunate victims was his own former loyal page, Gustaf Ribbing. During his interrogation, when he was subject to the worst tortures of the royal dungeons, Ribbing was asked if Sture was conspiring against the king and, unsurprisingly, he said yes.

> “Erik was like a spoiled child, always acting on emotional impulse”

In fact, he said yes to every name that was suggested and added a few more for good measure. Among the list of supposed conspirators was Sture's father and brother, as well as an assortment of other attendees at that ill-fated party. One by one they were dragged in to face interrogation and forced to confess to plots that existed only in the king's fevered mind. When Sture returned from his failed mission to Lorraine, he found a prison cell waiting for him once more. Nils Svantesson Sture's luck had finally run out.

The uproar from the ruling classes was immense and in May 1567, Erik summoned a meeting of the Riksdag of the Estates, Sweden's ruling government body, to settle the conspiracies and the fate of the conspirators once and for all. Erik, it seemed, had had a change of heart.

Unbeknownst to some of those who had been invited to attend negotiations, they had been named as traitors by Gustaf Ribbing. As they made their way to the Riksdag with the hope of finally putting an end to the paranoia that had seized the court, they received invitations to rest and replenish themselves at Svarsjö Castle. There was no suggestion of any plot or punishment and perhaps they really believed that the mentally unstable king was enjoying a period of sanity.

On their arrival at Svarsjö Castle, the nobles discovered that they had been tricked. Rather than a friendly reception, they were placed under arrest and put on trial. Among those arrested were the imprisoned Sture's father and brother, as well as others who were believed to be in conspiratorial league with the Sture family. Some of those who had received invites were fortunate to hear of the arrests before they arrived at the castle and they promptly changed their plans, narrowly avoiding a very gruesome fate.

The six nobles arrested on arrival at Svartsjö Castle were put on trial for a variety of charges relating to the supposed conspiracy against the king. The proof was a collection of circumstantial evidence, confessions extracted under torture and plain, old-fashioned gossip. Was there any truth in them? Who knows, but given the king's by now out-of-control paranoia, that hardly mattered anyway. No evidence existed that would clear the names of the arrested men, and even if it had, it's probably safe to say that Erik would not have been interested in hearing it. As far as he was concerned, these nobles were out to get him. Unsurprisingly, those who had been dragged along to face a trial were all sentenced to death. This time, however, it seemed highly likely that the sentence would be carried out.

When Sture's mother, Martha Leijonhufvud, heard that her husband and two of her sons had been arrested, she and her daughter, Anne, hastened to Svartsjö. Here, Martha begged to be given an audience with Erik and tried to reach him via his mistress, Karin Månsdotter. Karin knew better than to get involved, and Martha and Anne were taken into custody, though they weren't officially arrested. Their status was grey at best, however, and when the prisoners were moved to Uppsala where the Riksdag would confirm the sentence of death, Martha and Anne were also taken with them.

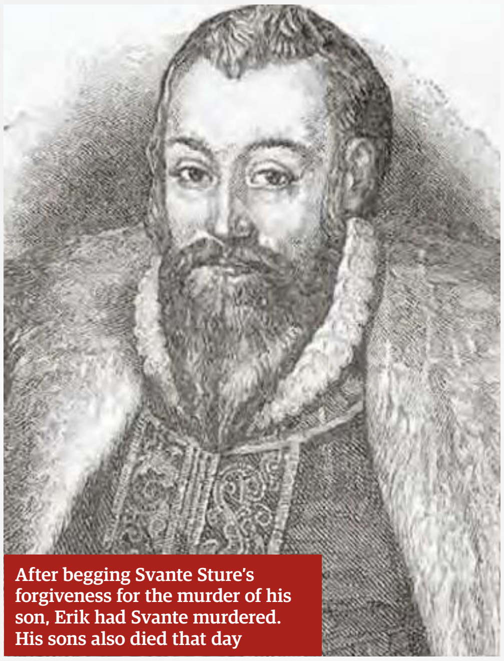
It was at this point that a situation that was already bizarre turned downright crazy. Standing before the Riksdag on 16 May 1567, Erik XIV was clearly not a well man and his mental instability was obvious to all. He was seized by an attack of anxiety and, instead of giving a speech regarding the situation, collapsed in a nervous heap. Just one week later he wrote a letter to Svante Sture in which he confirmed that the charges of treason were to be set aside; the Sture family were forgiven once more. The king begged Svante Sture for forgiveness, kneeling before him to apologise.

By this point, of course, Sture had already been sentenced to death and spared twice, so he probably believed that freedom was just around the corner. It would be an easy mistake to make. Erik was like a spoiled child, always acting on emotional impulse and regretting it, never sure what he actually wanted. Ironically, of course, all of this had the consequence of making his worst paranoid fantasies come true, and by now the country was turning against him.

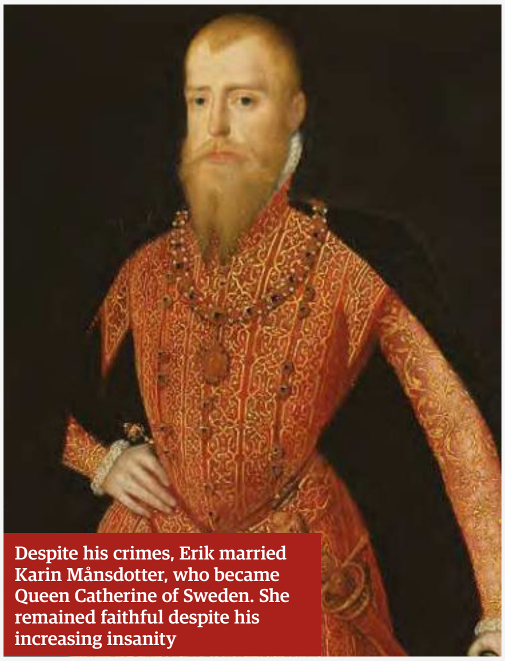
Of course, as Erik's fragile mental foundations crumbled away like chalk, those periods of mercy became shorter and shorter and though Sture had been pardoned, he remained in the king's custody. Until he walked free from the dungeons, his life was in danger. Finding the king in a deeply agitated state, his advisors prevailed upon him to take some time out and calm himself. While strolling in the grounds on 24 May however, he received word that his half-brother, John, had mustered a rebellion and intended to usurp the Swedish crown.

The few threads of sanity that Erik XIV clung to now snapped. Faced with losing his throne, he plunged into a white-hot rage. He returned to the castle, sought out Sture and stabbed him, leaving him for dead on the floor of his cell. Telling one of the jailers to finish the job, the murderous monarch next visited Svante, Sture's father and again fell to his knees, begging for forgiveness. Chillingly though, he told Svante that he would have to die too, for he could hardly be expected to forgive his son's killer.

With horrifying calmness, Erik rose to his feet and left the room, making his way to the castle entrance. Here he told the guards to kill every prisoner and spare only the noble named Sten. Following his orders to the letter, they finished off Sture and his brother, Erik, as well as their father, Svante. Another pair of imprisoned nobles, Abraham Stenbock and Ivar Ivarsson also died that day on the order of the



After begging Svante Sture's forgiveness for the murder of his son, Erik had Svante murdered. His sons also died that day



Despite his crimes, Erik married Karin Månsdotter, who became Queen Catherine of Sweden. She remained faithful despite his increasing insanity king. Two other prisoners named Sten Banér and Sten Eriksson were held in the castle that day. Faced with the men and an order to spare someone named Sten, the guards daren't risk killing the wrong prisoner, so both survived.

And what of the king, who had vanished into the horizon? Erik's tutor, Dionysius Beurreus, mustered a search party of guards to search for his former pupil. A few days after the murder they tracked down the monarch, his sanity utterly shattered, roaming naked in the woods beside the castle. Seeing the search party, Erik issued an order to his guards to kill Beurreus and though the king was mad, he was still the king, so the guards complied and ran the tutor through. As Erik disappeared into the shelter of the trees, the court went into damage limitation. The murders were kept secret and each day food was taken down to the prisoners who lay dead, while their friends and families were still permitted to deliver messages for them.

On 27 May, three days after the murders, Erik was wandering in rags. He was returned to Stockholm where he met with his stepmother, Queen Dowager Catherine Stenbock. He confessed, and it was left to the queen to agree compensation for the bereaved families, as well as a posthumous pardon for the victims. Thanks to the machinations of Persson, the murders were legally recognised as executions, so Erik faced no punishment.

For the next six months, Erik was in a state of insanity and the country was ruled by the Privy Council. Though the king married Karin, when he recovered his sanity in 1567, Erik's sentence was dismissed and he returned to power. He even committed another murder, stabbing his secretary, Mårten Helsing. Erik's days were numbered and in 1568 he finally fell to a coup led by his half-brother, John. He languished in prison for nine years until one of the murderous king's enemies finally got to him. Erik XIV died after eating soup tainted with arsenic in 1577, his insanity finally at an end.

JÖRAN PERSSON, SPYMASTER AND SECRETARY

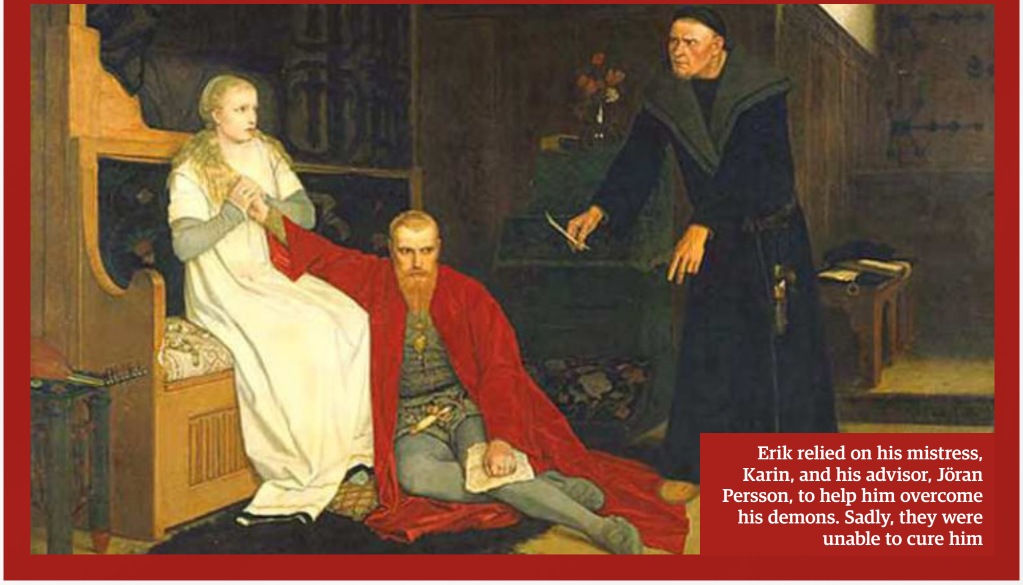
No matter how deep his madness and how rampant his paranoia, Erik XIV always trusted one man above all others - Jöran Persson, who joined the court in 1555 as secretary to Erik's father. He was smart, cunning and nobody was in the least bit surprised when he maintained his position once Erik became king.

During Erik's absences from the kingdom, Persson enjoyed unparalleled powers and influence in Sweden. He decided on the sentencing of prisoners, presided over their executions and became deeply unpopular among the noble classes as well as the public.

A 21st century history of Sweden named Persson as "colossally repulsive" and he sat at the head of a network of spies who seemed to exist purely to fuel Erik's overwhelming paranoia. The intelligence that came to him was interpreted by Persson before being passed to the king and, as a result of reports made by these spies, over two hundred people were tried and put to death. It was Persson who had the audacity to convince the Privy Council that the Sture murders were actually executions. He gave an eloquent argument to the nobles who formed the council, and by the end of it, they were under no doubt that the victims were guilty of treason. Therefore, they were due to be executed anyway: Erik and his guards had merely saved the state the trouble.

With his love of astrology and rumours of witchcraft attached to both Persson and his mother, the king's advisor become a dark and feared figure in Sweden. As long as Erik reigned he seemed untouchable, yet when the mad king fell, Persson's enemies were finally able to strike against him.

Persson was tried for his role in the suppression of the noble classes and found guilty by a court of those self same nobles. He died in September 1568 in front of a crowd of thousands who gathered to watch him being broken on the wheel and beheaded. Sentenced to die along her son, Persson's mother fatally flung herself beneath the hooves of a horse, robbing the executioner of another victim.



Erik relied on his mistress, Karin, and his advisor, Jöran Persson, to help him overcome his demons. Sadly, they were unable to cure him

In the dungeons of Uppsala castle, the prisoners met a gruesome fate at the hands of the deranged king and his loyal guards

Crown Prince Rudolf of Austria poses for a photograph in 1887, two years before his death

THE SCANDAL THAT ENDED A DYNASTY

In the late 1880s, Vienna was rocked by a murder suicide at the very top of the royal family, but were things quite as they seemed?

Written by **Catherine Curzon**

Immortalised in film and literature, the infamous Mayerling incident has all the ingredients of the most scandalous fictional potboilers. With the heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and his beautiful teenage lover caught in a web of sex, intrigue, murder and suicide, it's hardly surprising that the suicide pact that shattered the peace of a Viennese forest in 1889 caught the attention of the general public worldwide. In fact, thanks to conspiracy, gossip and confusion, the mystery of Mayerling was not solved for 60 years. It all began, as so many scandals do, with a forbidden and passionate love affair. In this case, the protagonists were Crown Prince Rudolf of Austria, and his mistress, Baroness Marie Vetsera, known as Mary. At 17, she was 13 years her lover's junior and both Rudolf and Mary's parents were keen for the entanglement to end. Little did they know that they would get their wish in the most final manner imaginable.

As the only son of Emperor Franz Josef I of Austria and Empress Elisabeth of Bavaria, also known as Sisi – a woman famed for her beauty and eye-wateringly narrow waist – Rudolf was heir apparent to the throne of the powerful Austro-Hungarian Empire. He had been married to Princess Stéphanie of Belgium since 1881, yet the union was not a happy one and the highly strung Crown Prince longed to be free of his wife. With no hope of securing a divorce, he turned his back on Stéphanie in favour of his many mistresses.

It was one of these unfortunate mistresses who would die beside him deep in the Vienna woods on 30 January 1889, their bodies discovered in the darkened bedroom of the Imperial hunting lodge at Mayerling. On the evening before his death, Crown Prince Rudolf had joined his parents for a dinner they had thrown prior to their trip to Buda, Hungary, yet he seemed preoccupied. Rudolf was distracted throughout the meal and left the dinner uncharacteristically early that evening, eager to travel to Mayerling in preparation for a hunting party the following day. Although this was true, no doubt the fact that his young mistress was waiting for him at the lodge might have been another reason not to hang around at dinner.

When Rudolf and Mary met at Mayerling, they retired to bed. As the night drew on nobody in the lodge heard anything untoward and, when Rudolf's valet, Loschek, knocked at this door the following morning, he had no reason to expect anything out of the ordinary. All of Loschek's efforts to rouse his employer met with silence from the locked bedroom and eventually the concerned valet summoned Rudolf's friend, Count Joseph Hoyos.

When no reply came despite the best efforts of the two men, they decided to take drastic action. Seizing an axe, Loschek hacked at the door until they could gain entry to the shuttered room. What they found shocked the unsuspecting men to the core, and spelled the first moments in the mystery of Mayerling.

Sitting on chair beside the bed, a table set with a glass and mirror before him, was Rudolf. He was dead, the only sign of anything untoward being a thread of crimson blood trickling from his open mouth. On the bed lay the body of Mary and there could be no doubt that both had been dead for some time. In the half-light Loschek and Hoyos saw no obvious signs of a struggle or violence, though the glass led them to believe that the couple might have drunk poison. Despite, or perhaps because of, the illustrious identity of the victims, the two men didn't raise the alarm, which might seem unthinkable to us.

In fact, the strict protocol of the Habsburg court meant that no alarm could be raised until the correct order of ceremony had been observed and that would take some time. Count Hoyos left Mayerling immediately and took the train to the capital, where he sought an audience with the Emperor's right-hand man, Count Paar. After listening to Hoyos's report of the scene at the lodge, Paar decided that the Empress must be told. It would then be her job to break the terrible news to her husband.

The next to be informed of the death of the Crown Prince was Baron Nopcsa, Paar's opposite number in the Empress's household. With the room growing ever more crowded, Nopcsa called for the Empress's lady-in-waiting, who would be expected to inform Elisabeth of her son's death.

By now, six people had already been told that the heir to the throne was dead, none of them his parents. When Empress Elisabeth was finally informed of her son's fate she was devastated yet still she had one last job to do, and that was to report to her husband. Though Elisabeth's despair was obvious, Emperor Franz Josef received the news with square-jawed stoicism. In actual fact, he was shattered by the death of his son, and the already strained marriage of the royal couple never recovered from the blow.

As Rudolf's mother and father reeled from the shock of his death, the wheels of the court finally began to turn. With confusion over the two deaths starting at the very moment Loschek and Hoyos discovered the bodies, the suggestion that the Crown Prince might have committed suicide sent shock waves throughout the royal household. It would surely be a scandal too far for a ruling Catholic family. Almost immediately a damage limitation exercise began, and the conspiracies started to unfold surrounding their deaths.

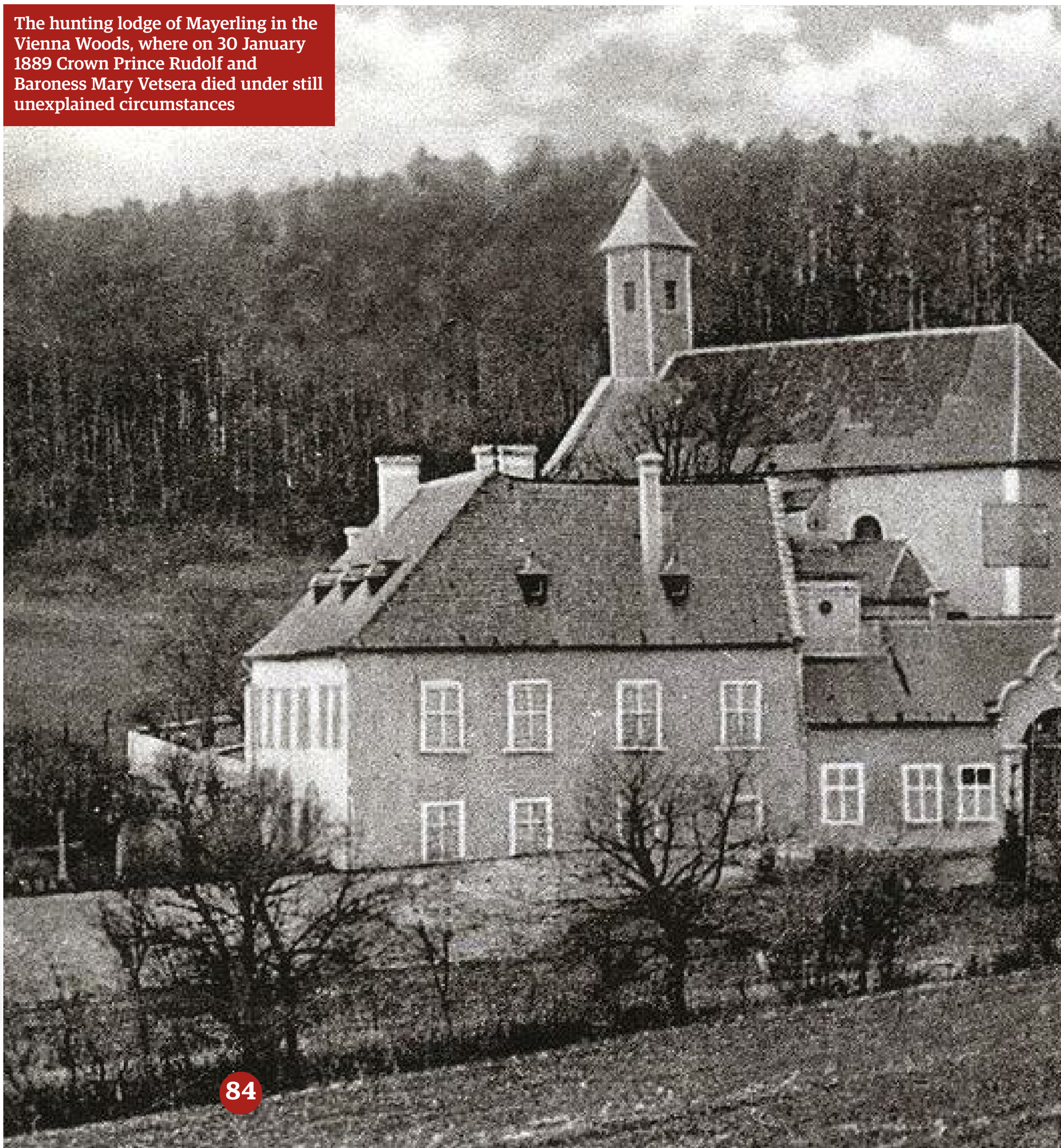
Princess Stéphanie of Belgium, the wife of Crown Prince Rudolf

The authorities converged on Mayerling and sealed off the entire area as they carried out their investigations, their every move scrutinised by the Imperial court. With no obvious signs of a struggle or other violent assault, the blood trickling from Rudolf's mouth took on a new significance, especially when taken alongside the glass that he had apparently used before his death. Such bleeding was a symptom of strychnine poisoning, though whether it was murder or suicide, the minister for Police could not be certain. Investigations centred on Rudolf, and Mary's family were ordered to remove her corpse without any fanfare or publicity. In the darkest hours of the following night her body was taken out of the lodge and straight to Heiligenkreuz a few miles away, to be buried in a Cistercian monastery's cemetery. Under the impression that she had committed suicide, her family had to be given special permission to bury Mary on the consecrated ground.

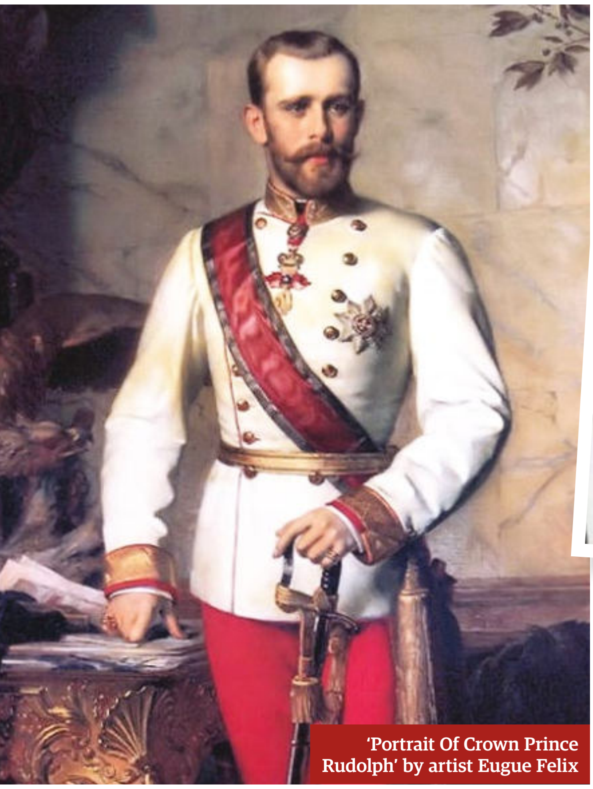
There was no autopsy, no enquiry and no notification of her secret funeral; indeed, it happened so quickly that even her own mother was unable to attend proceedings. But that wouldn't be the end of the story of Baroness Marie Alexandrine von Vetsera's remains.

Regardless of what the authorities might believed behind the scenes, there was no way that the public could not be told of the sordid goings on at Mayerling. Court gossip was quick to place the blame on Mary, claiming that she had shot or poisoned her lover before taking her own life. Whether he had been murdered or died by

“The suggestion that the Crown Prince might have committed suicide sent shock waves throughout the royal household”



The hunting lodge of Mayerling in the Vienna Woods, where on 30 January 1889 Crown Prince Rudolf and Baroness Mary Vetsera died under still unexplained circumstances


'Portrait Of Crown Prince Rudolph' by artist Eugue Felix

Baroness Mary Vetsera photographed in c.1887

suicide, the Crown Prince's death was far from easy to explain, so initial reports made no effort to do so. Instead, when the official notice of Rudolf's death was issued, the cause was given as "a rupture of an aneurism of the heart". In an effort to maintain respectability and head off scandal, no mention was made of Mary's presence, let alone her death.

Of course, with such a high-profile victim there was no way that the royal family would be able to conceal the truth behind events at Mayerling. Though the 19th-century press may have been a little slower to react than its 21st-century counterpart, the media was soon swarming all over Vienna. Faced with a press frenzy, the official commission into the death of Crown Prince Rudolf opened under the authority of Doctor Hermann von Widerhofer, and soon yet more explanations were doing the rounds in Austria.

Suddenly, there was no heart attack and no poison, but a gun, while those who had tried to pin the blame on Mary were to be disappointed. Still, confusion and rumour held sway and reports circulated that the unsuspecting Crown Prince had been shot in the back, with Mary killed by a head wound. This raised the possibility of either a murder-suicide with Mary pulling the trigger, or even the presence of a third party, who killed both Rudolf and the Baroness.

When the commission finally made its report, the official explanation was one that the Imperial family had been dreading. Dr Widerhofer concluded that the gunman had been Rudolf, acting "while the balance of [his] mind was disturbed." In this latest and official version of events, the Crown Prince had shot Mary and then, hours later, turned the gun on himself. In fact, another of Rudolf's mistresses would later claim that he had tried to convince her to take part in a suicide pact, and she had refused. His final letters also make reference to suicide, though are not direct threats.

The motive was one of simple despair, Widerhofer explained, with Rudolf driven to

SUICIDE, MURDER OR AN ACCIDENT?

For 100 years, Mayerling has been fertile ground for conspiracy fans

Poison

At first, witnesses who found the bodies of the couple believed that they had been poisoned. It soon became apparent that this wasn't the case, though rumours of poison circulated for some time.

Heart attack

In initial notifications from the Imperial family, Rudolf's death was explained away as a heart attack, with no mention of Mary's death to be seen. As soon as the media descended and started asking uncomfortable questions, this explanation was quietly abandoned.

The shot

When word got around that Rudolf had been shot in the back while Mary sported a head wound, there were two options. Either she had killed her lover and then turned the gun on herself, or ruthless murderers had claimed both their lives. Dr Armgaard Graves theorised that political assassins were to blame, while Clemens Gruber pointed the finger at Mary's own brother.

The unwanted child

Claiming that only one bullet had been fired that night, Gerd Holler postulated that Mary had died as a result of a botched abortion, sending her lover into a fit of despair. Mad with grief, he killed himself rather than face life without her.

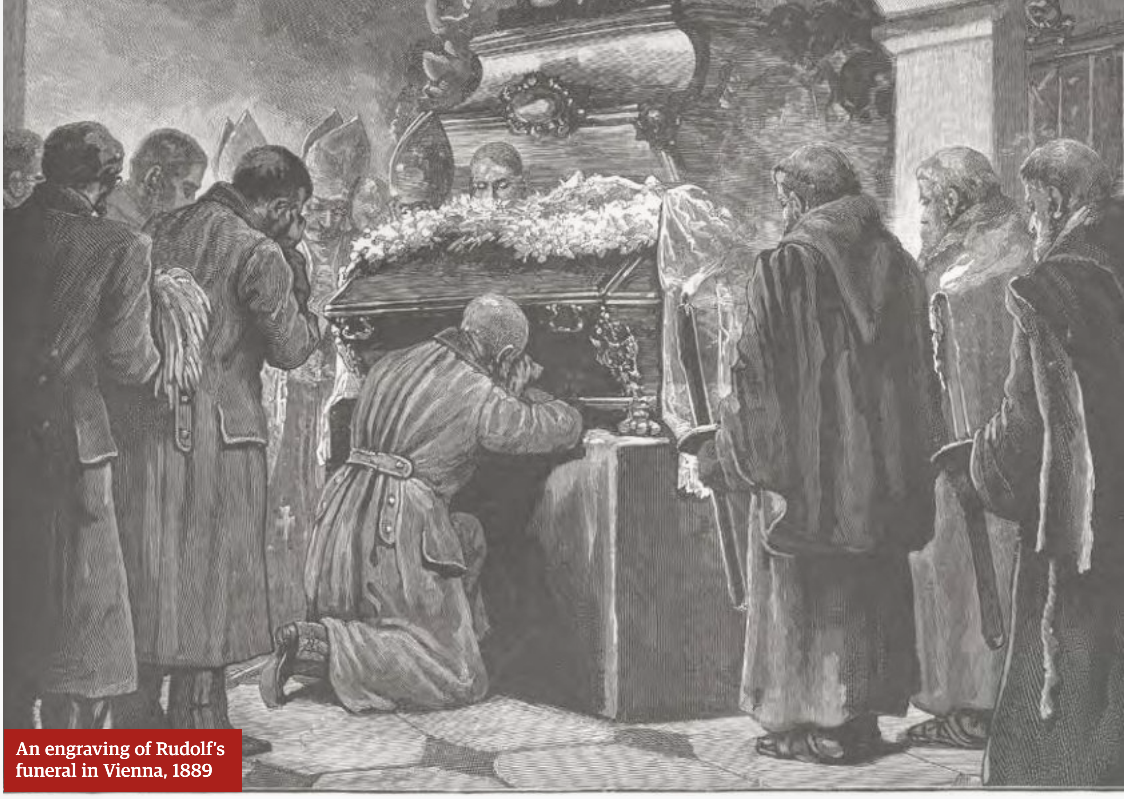
The foreign spies

Zita, the last Empress of Austria, claimed that the couple were murdered by foreign spies, keen to prevent the heir from ever assuming power. As a known liberal, there were plenty who didn't want to see Rudolf on the throne.

THE TRUTH?

The official inquest into the deaths of Baroness Mary and Crown Prince Rudolf concluded that the couple had entered into a suicide pact with one another.

After killing his lover, Rudolf sat beside her corpse throughout the night before he finally took his own life. Rudolf's correspondence hinted at suicide and when farewell letters were found that Mary had written to her family, it finally seemed as though the tragic mystery had been solved.



An engraving of Rudolf's funeral in Vienna, 1889

desperate measures by the Emperor's demands that he break off his three-month romance with the young Baroness. Heartbroken by the thought that he must abandon his teenage lover, Rudolf talked her into a suicide pact. Unwilling to stir up such a scandal, Franz Josef had the enquiry wound up and the police declared the matter settled.

Ordinarily, since he had died by his own hand, Rudolf would not have been allowed to rest alongside his ancestors in the Habsburg family vault. His grieving father, however, devoted himself to securing his son's rightful resting place in the Church of the Capuchins and appealed to the Vatican to intervene. On the understanding that Rudolf's suicide had been caused by temporary insanity they agreed and, as Mary lay virtually forgotten in her secret grave in Heiligenkreuz, the Crown Prince took his illustrious place in the Imperial Crypt. With the bodies buried and the enquiry closed, it seemed as though the Mayerling affair was all over apart from the grieving. In fact, things were far from finished.

As the dust settled and the funeral bells died away, the fallout of the deaths began. The far from happy marriage of the Emperor and Empress went into free fall, the official enquiry papers were spirited away and the line of succession of the House of Habsburg changed forever. Franz Josef had the lodge at Mayerling converted into a convent, with the chapel situated on the site of the bedroom where the couple died. To this day, the Carmelite nuns who reside there still pray for the souls of Rudolf and Mary.

As the years passed by, the story of the deaths at Mayerling passed into history, yet the unsatisfying conclusion to the enquiry ensured that it was never forgotten. Sisi went to her grave in 1898 courtesy of an assassin's blade, with pneumonia claiming the life of Franz Josef in 1916 and two years later, the Austro-Hungarian Empire fell.

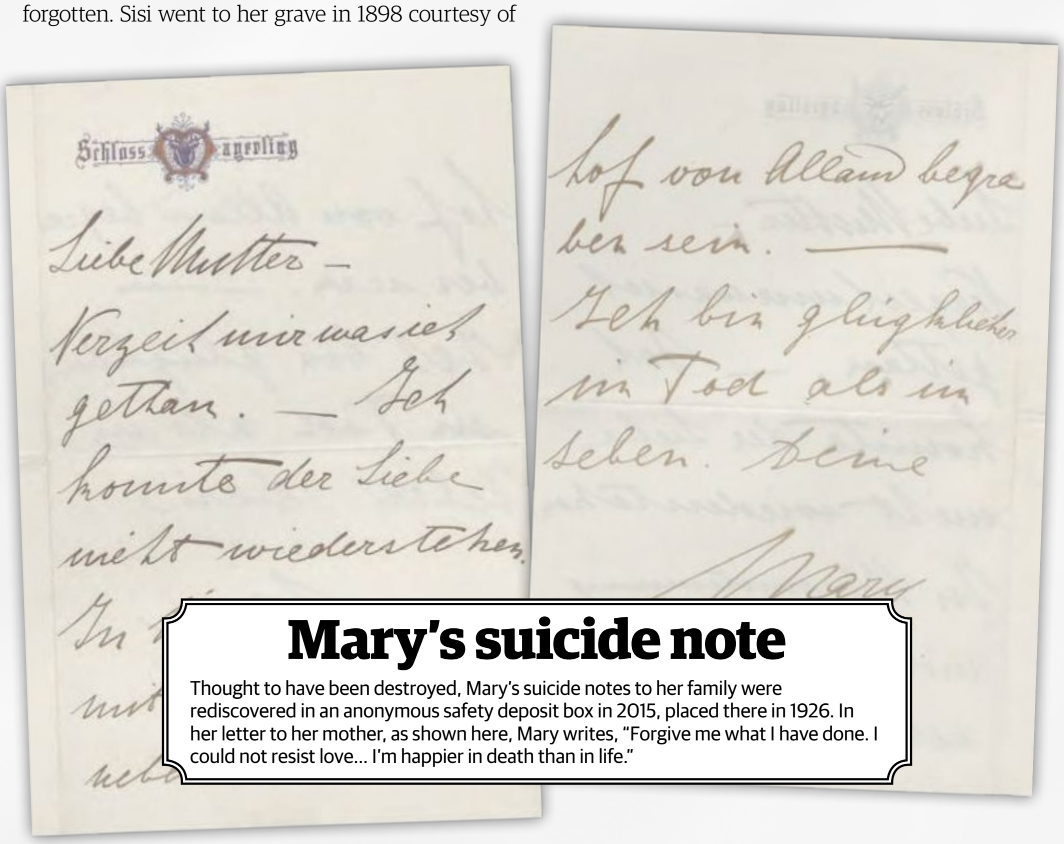
> "There was no way that the public could not be told of the sordid goings on"

Years passed before the Mayerling incident began to stir again. Deep in the churchyard at Heiligenkreuz Russian troops disturbed Baroness Mary Vetsera's grave, smashing her coffin in the process. For ten long years Mary's remains were left open to the elements until the Red Army withdrew from Austria and the family of the unfortunate Baroness were finally able to tend to her desecrated grave. Aware of her part in the Mayerling affair, the family invited a local physician, Gerd Holler, to examine Mary's remains. To their surprise, he concluded that her skeleton showed no evidence of a bullet hole, the discovery casting the official explanation of events at the hunting lodge into doubt once more. The Mayerling scandal became a talking point all over again, with Holler determined to solve it once and for all.

Holler claimed that the long-sealed Vatican archive revealed that only one bullet had been fired from the rifle found in the bedroom. Mary. Although her skull showed some unexplained damage, Holler concluded that she had been neither shot nor poisoned, but had likely died due to a tragic accident.

Although no independent evidence existed to support his claim, the doctor decided that the most likely cause of death was a botched abortion. Wracked by grief and unable to contemplate life without his teenage lover, Rudolf shot himself.

In 1991, more than a century after she was first laid to rest, the unfortunate Mary's grave was desecrated once more. Helmut Flatzelsteiner, a furniture salesman with an obsession for the Mayerling mystery, dug up the coffin and stole it. The unfortunate Mary's empty grave wasn't noticed for over 12 months. Flatzelsteiner took the Baroness's bones to Linz, where he commissioned a private forensic examination that he hoped might prove once and for all how Mary died. To avoid suspicion, Flatzelsteiner claimed that the bones



Schloss Mayerling

Liebe Mutter –
Verzeiht mir was ich
gethan. – Ich
konnte der Liebe
nicht wiederstehen,
In
mit
neb

Hof von Alland begra
ben sein. –
Ich bin glücklicher
im Tod als im
Leben. Deine
Mary

Mary's suicide note

Thought to have been destroyed, Mary's suicide notes to her family were rediscovered in an anonymous safety deposit box in 2015, placed there in 1926. In her letter to her mother, as shown here, Mary writes, "Forgive me what I have done. I could not resist love… I'm happier in death than in life."

Rudolf lying in state in 1889, the bandage on his head covering cuts made to during his autopsy

MARY
FREIIN VETSERA
RUHESTÄTTE DER FAMILIE GRATZER

The grave of Mary Vetsera, her final resting place after decades of unrest and investigation

> "It was proof that Mary was intending to commit suicide alongside Crown Prince Rudolf"

belonged to his ancestor who had been killed a century earlier, and he wanted to know if they had been shot.

In fact, Flatzelsteiner's efforts proved fruitless. Mary's skull was so badly damaged by the passage of time that the scientists couldn't conclude how she had died. When the truth came out, Flatzelsteiner managed to escape prison but was hit by a hefty fine, and the remains of the unlucky young woman were once again returned to her grave. Hopefully she will finally be able to rest in peace.

The mystery of Mayerling still had one final twist to take and, in 2015, there came a coda to the story. During an audit in Austria's Schoellerbank, a safety deposit box was discovered and, tantalisingly, it appeared to have no known owner.

Inside the box were family photographs and letters written by Baroness Mary Vetsera in the days and weeks leading up to her death. Deposited in 1926 by an unknown client of the bank and subsequently forgotten, among the papers were farewell notes from Mary to her family. This final piece of the jigsaw proved beyond a doubt that Mary was intending to commit suicide alongside Crown Prince Rudolf and had been a willing party to the plan. This was no murder, but a pact between a passionate couple who could not stand the thought of being torn apart, eventually settling on a grand and fatal gesture to prove their devotion.

For all the years of intrigue and mystery, all the cover-ups, scandal and criminal mischief, the tragic mystery of Mayerling had finally been solved.

THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN SUCCESSION

With an heir but no spare, the death of Prince Rudolph left a dynasty floundering, reaching for a new heir, with crippling consequences

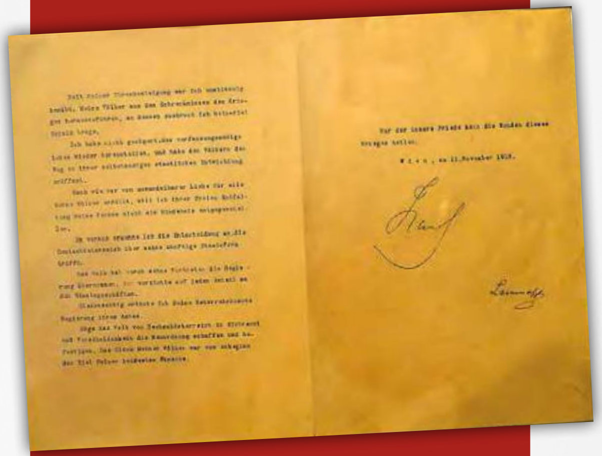
When Crown Prince Rudolf died, the Habsburg line of succession changed forever, lurching headlong into a slow constitutional crisis. Although Franz Joseph and Sisi had two daughters, they had only one son. With his death, the next in line to the throne was the King's brother, Karl Ludwig. Rumours began to spread that Karl Ludwig had renounced his claim, but in any case he didn't live long enough to take it, dying of typhoid fever in 1896. Next in line was his son, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, who would become less famous for his life than the manner of his death.

The boorish, strong-willed Ferdinand and his uncle didn't get on. They disagreed on everything from home affairs to foreign policy. Things got worse when the Emperor voiced his disapproval of Franz Ferdinand's choice of bride, yet the young Archduke refused to be swayed. When Franz Joseph stayed away from the wedding, the relationship between the two men collapsed and the Emperor began to fear for the future of his empire.

On 28 June 1914 in Sarajevo, Gavrilo Princip shot and killed Franz Ferdinand, setting off the chain of events that would lead to WWI. Upon hearing that his nephew was dead, Franz Joseph breathed a sigh of relief, sure that Archduke Charles, the next in line to the throne, was a far safer bet.

In fact, that fateful summer day in Sarajevo proved to have a devastating impact on the Austro-Hungarian Empire. When Franz Joseph died in 1916, his empire was already at war and Charles I inherited an administration in crisis. His efforts at finding a diplomatic solution proved clumsy and, with no other option open to him, the Emperor found himself backed into a corner.

On 11 November 1918, Charles surrendered his political authority and prepared to leave Austria forever. After more than 150 years, the once-mighty Austro-Hungarian Empire ceased to exist.



The declaration of 1918, signed by Emperor Charles I, was the beginning of the end for the Austro-Hungarian Empire

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MURDER IN THE HOUSE OF ROMANOV

Shot and stabbed by drunken revolutionaries, the murder of the Russian royal family still reverberates today

Written by **Will Lawrence**

When they awoke on the morning of Tuesday 16 July 1918, it was just another day in captivity for the Romanovs. The former tsar of Russia, Nicholas Alexandrovich Romanov, his wife Alexandra and their five children had spent the last 16 months in captivity, Nicholas having abdicated in March 1917, bringing to an end over 300 years of Romanov rule over the Russian empire.

To begin with, the family was held under arrest at Tsarskoe Selo, enjoying a life of relative luxury. Some say that Nicholas, never a confident or comfortable ruler, had never been happier, revelling in the trappings of rule without the responsibilities. In late April 1918, however, the family were transferred to the bleak Urals and settled in the town of Ekaterinburg.

Here, at Ipatiev House, their lives became monotonous. Their Bolshevik captors depriving them of the luxuries to which they had always been accustomed to and treating them with increasing disdain.

The tsar's four daughters, Olga, Tatiana, Maria and Anastasia, were harassed; graffiti appeared on the walls making lewd suggestions about Alexandra and her murdered favourite, the peasant holy man Rasputin. Still, the family lived in hope. The arrival in early July of Yakov Yurovsky had brought the Romanovs some relief. A close friend of Lenin's, Yurovsky introduced more disciplined guards to the house who treated Nicholas's daughters with respect.

Alexandra, meanwhile, was boosted by an upturn in her son's constitution; Alexei, the couple's youngest child, was afflicted by haemophilia and had often suffered ill health. When she went to bed at about 10.30pm on 16 July, Alexandra penned a positive note in her diary. It was cool, she wrote, about 15 degrees. Maybe the family's ordeal, suffering amid the heat and tedium of Ekaterinburg, would soon abate.

A few hours later, she was woken from her slumber. Yurovsky, it transpired, was not a harbinger of hope. He roused the family and their servants at about midnight, reporting that the anti-Bolshevik White Army was approaching and that the family might be in danger from heavy shelling. They were urged to dress as quickly as possible. The women wrapped themselves up in clothes sewn full of precious stones, hoping, perhaps, that this night might yet end in liberation.

> "As the gun smoke cleared, groans from the blood-spattered floor testified to a bungled execution"

At 2.15am on 17 July, the seven Romanovs along with their doctor, Eugene Botkin, and three other servants - the valet, a maid and the cook - hurried into the cool night air. Yurovsky led them from the main house across a courtyard to a small basement room at the far corner of the house.

According to one source, Nicholas was heard to say to his daughters reassuringly: "Well, we're going to get out of this place." Some believe he was simply acting as a comforting father, knowing full well the fate that lay ahead. Others believe he was speaking what he perceived as the truth. After all, if the approaching White Army were to take the town, perhaps they could be returned to more favourable circumstances. There were some monarchists among the White ranks.

The room into which the Romanovs were ushered was a tight space, less than 13 square-feet, with iron bars covering the one window. There was no furniture. A single bulb hanging overhead cast a weak light. "What, no chairs?" asked Alexandra. "May we not sit?"

Two chairs were brought in and Alexandra and Alexei sat down. Yurovsky told the 11 captives that he needed a photograph of the group to send to Moscow, where there were concerns that the family might have escaped. He set them up in two rows, Nicholas standing front and centre with his son seated next to him. Alexandra sat in her chair close to the wall and her daughters gathered around her. The servants, meanwhile, lined up behind Nicholas and Alexei.

The family was then left in peace for 30 minutes as they awaited the photographer. When Yurovsky returned, however, he brought not a camera and tripod, but a firing squad. There were six Hungarians and five Russians. As the men crowded into the room and confusion ran across the faces of the family, Yurovsky stood in the front of Nicholas holding a small piece of paper from which he read their death sentence.

"In view of the fact that your relatives are continuing their attack on Soviet Russia, the Ural Executive Committee has decided to execute you." Nicholas's jaw dropped. In shock, he couldn't believe what he was hearing. "What?" he said to Yurovsky. "What?"

Yurovsky repeated the statement and pulled a pistol from his pocket. He shot Nicholas at point-blank range. The former tsar crumpled to the floor. The firing squad then opened fire. Each man had been assigned a target but, in the constrained space, and with plenty of vodka running through the shooters' veins, a melee ensued.

The men shot poorly. Alexandra and her eldest daughter Olga each tried to make the sign of the cross but they did not have time. Alexandra took a bullet in the left side of her skull and died immediately. The doctor and two of the servants also died swiftly.

As the gun smoke cleared, groans from the blood-spattered floor testified to a bungled execution. It was the tsar's children who suffered most horribly. They had not died quickly. Some of the executioners had been temporarily deafened by the gunfire and their clothing streaked with powder burns from where their comrades had shot over their shoulders.

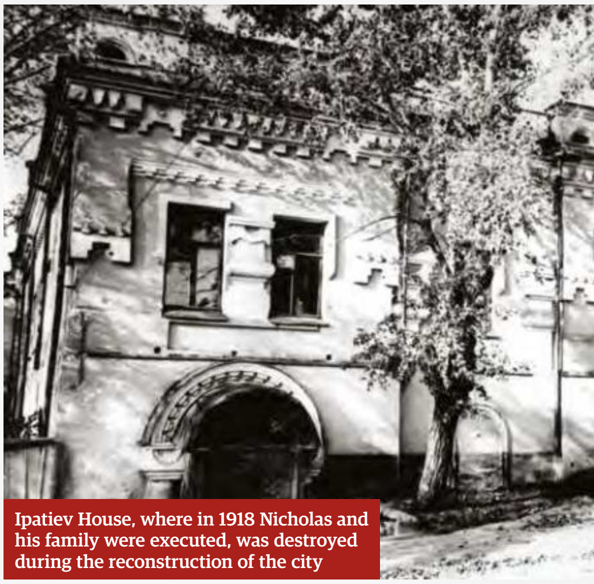
At this point Alexei, at least three of the daughters and the maid all remained alive. Their clothes stuffed with jewels had, apparently, acted like bulletproof vests. According to the scholar Robert Massie, "barely visible through the smoke, Maria and Anastasia pressed against the wall, squatting, covering their heads with their arms until bullets cut them down."

Another scholar, Helen Rappaport, writing more recently, contends that the sisters were finished off with bayonets, Olga having been shot in the jaw, and Tatiana in the back of the head as she tried to escape. Last of the women to die, she says, was Anastasia, stabbed in the chest by a drunken guard before Yurovsky finished the job with his pistol.

13-year-old Alexei, it seems, was the last family member to die. Lying on the floor, says Massie, he raised his arm to shield himself before clutching at his father's shirt. "One of the executioners kicked the tsarevich in the head with his heavy boot," Massie writes. "Alexei moaned. Yurovsky stepped up and fired two shots into the boy's ear."

What scholars do agree upon is that what was planned as a quick and clean execution played out as a grim slaughter. They also agree on the time frame. It took 20 minutes for the Bolsheviks to murder the royal family and toss their mangled bodies into a truck.

"Given all the evidence that has come to light," writes the historian Orlando Figes, "it is inconceivable that any of the Romanovs survived this ordeal." The only certain survivor, he says, was Alexei's pet spaniel, Joy.



Ipatiev House, where in 1918 Nicholas and his family were executed, was destroyed during the reconstruction of the city

THE ROAD TO REVOLUTION

November 1894
Nicholas II accedes to the throne after the death of his father, Alexander III, who was a far more open-minded and able monarch than his son will prove to be.

February 1904
The Russo-Japanese War erupts. The results will be devastating for Russia, Nicholas's signing of the Treaty of Portsmouth ceding power in East Asia.

January 1905
Revolution breaks out across the Russian empire amid a wave of political and social unrest. Workers go on strike and military units mutiny.

January 1905
Bloody Sunday unfolds as the Imperial Guard fires upon unarmed demonstrators, who are attempting to present a petition to the tsar at the Winter Palace.

October 1905
The October Manifesto sees Nicholas guarantee civil liberties to all Russian citizens. By signing, he creates the duma, an elected legislature.

November 1905
The peasant holy man Grigori Rasputin arrives at court. His influence there alienates many, especially after the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

Tsar Nicholas in captivity at Tsarskoe Selo

> “It took 20 minutes for the Bolsheviks to murder the royal family and toss their mangled bodies into a truck”

The official announcement appeared two days later on 19 July, an editorial in the newspaper of record, *Izvestia*, claiming that Nicholas had been executed and the family sent to a safe place. News of the murder, they believed, could incite public sympathy. The truth remained largely unknown until the publication in 1924 of a book by Nikolai Sokolov, which revealed much of the horror.

Even when evidence for the death of the entire family began to leak, legends sprung up that perhaps some had survived. The legend still lives today, notes Figes, "which merely goes to show that there is more currency - and more profit - in fiction than in history."

The murder of the Romanovs has emerged as a story of huge significance in the history of the Russian Revolution, even though, at the time, news of the tsar's death and rumours about the fate of his family elicited little response from the populace. Many historians, meanwhile, regarded the execution as little more than a footnote in a much larger story. After all, the revolution claimed millions of lives. Why should the death of this one family deserve particular attention?

The answer, says Figes, lies in the fact that these murders were "a declaration of the Terror. It was a statement that from now on individuals would count for nothing in the civil war." He points to the words of the Red Army founder Leon Trotsky: “We must put an end once and for all to the papist-Quaker babble about the sanctity of human life.” Certainly, as the Russian Revolution unfolded, it showed little consideration for human life.

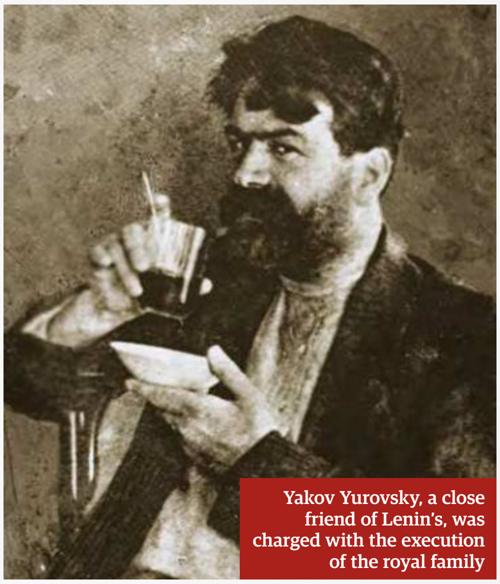
The Russian Revolution is, in fact, a collective name for two separate revolutions, the first coming in February 1917 and sparking the dismantling of the tsarist autocracy and the founding of a new Provisional Government. The second came in October of the same year when the Bolsheviks overthrew the Provisional Government and stirred a civil war against the anti-socialist White Army. Some scholars put the number of deaths in this conflict in the region of 12 million. The terror wrought by the Bolshevik state security service, the Cheka, meanwhile, accounted for thousands more.

It began with the February Revolution of 1917, which erupted upon the streets of the Russian capital city Petrograd (formerly St Petersburg), as food shortages took hold. On 22 February, thousands of metal and textile workers took to the streets. By 27 February, more than 200,000 workers went on strike, marching in the streets and hurling missiles at the police.

This torrent became a flood, and by the start of March, 170,000 soldiers were mingling with the insurgents and clamouring for change. The revolution was in full swing. The members of the Duma, the elected legislature, then established a temporary government having already persuaded the army generals that the tsar must abdicate. He duly obliged. Two forces brought about his downfall: the mass mobilisation of the workers and soldiers, and the political machinations of a middle-class parliamentary opposition.

“The collapse of the autocracy,” says historian Steve Smith, “was rooted in a crisis of modernisation.” During the latter half of the 19th century, the Russian state worked tirelessly to keep up with the military and economic development of the western powers. “The government hoped that it could carry out modernisation while maintaining tight control over society,” writes Smith. “Yet the effect of industrialisation, urbanisation, internal migration and the emergence of new social classes was to set in train forces that served to erode the foundations of the autocratic state.”

This erosion was focused in the emergence of an industrial proletariat “snatched from the plough and hurled into the factory furnace,” in Trotsky's famous words. Concentrated in large numbers for the first time, they emerged as a collective with considerable political clout. As Smith points out, the workers' new urban lives offered them education and cultural diversity, exposing them to the “subversive political ideas of Social Democrats and Socialist Revolutionaries. The wretched conditions in which workers lived, the drudgery of their work



Yakov Yurovsky, a close friend of Lenin's, was charged with the execution of the royal family

June 1907
As unrest abates, Prime Minister Stolypin launches a coup against the duma, limiting its power and reducing peasant representation.

January 1912
Social Democrats split into two camps, the relatively moderate Mensheviks and the more radical Bolsheviks.

July 1914
World War I breaks out and Russia, entering the war in support of Serbia, suffers a string of demoralising defeats.

November 1915
Nicholas takes personal command of the armed forces, a task for which he is ill suited. Inflation rises and food shortages ensue.

February 1917
Workers and soldiers in Petrograd take to the streets and the duma establishes the Provisional Government.

March 1917
Nicholas abdicates the throne in favour of his brother, Michael. Aware it is a poisoned chalice, Michael renounces his claim the next day.

October 1917
Vladimir Ilyich Lenin leads the Bolshevik coup, which topples the Provisional Government and leads to the outbreak of civil war.

> “When evidence for the death of the entire family began to leak, legends sprung up that perhaps some had survived”

and their pitiful wages heightened their sense of separateness not only from the government but from privileged society in general.”

In addition, a new social group had emerged during the 19th century, defined less by its socioeconomic position than by its attitude towards imperial power. This ‘intelligentsia’ filtered through different strata of Russian society as time went on, seeping into the new middle classes, and even the upper classes as the aristocrats became more commercially aware.

These social groups united to ignite the flames of revolution that burned during the 1905 uprising. This the tsar survived, having in the October Manifesto agreed to the formation of an elected legislature and the concession of many civil rights. Though autocratic power was weakened, it was not necessarily doomed.

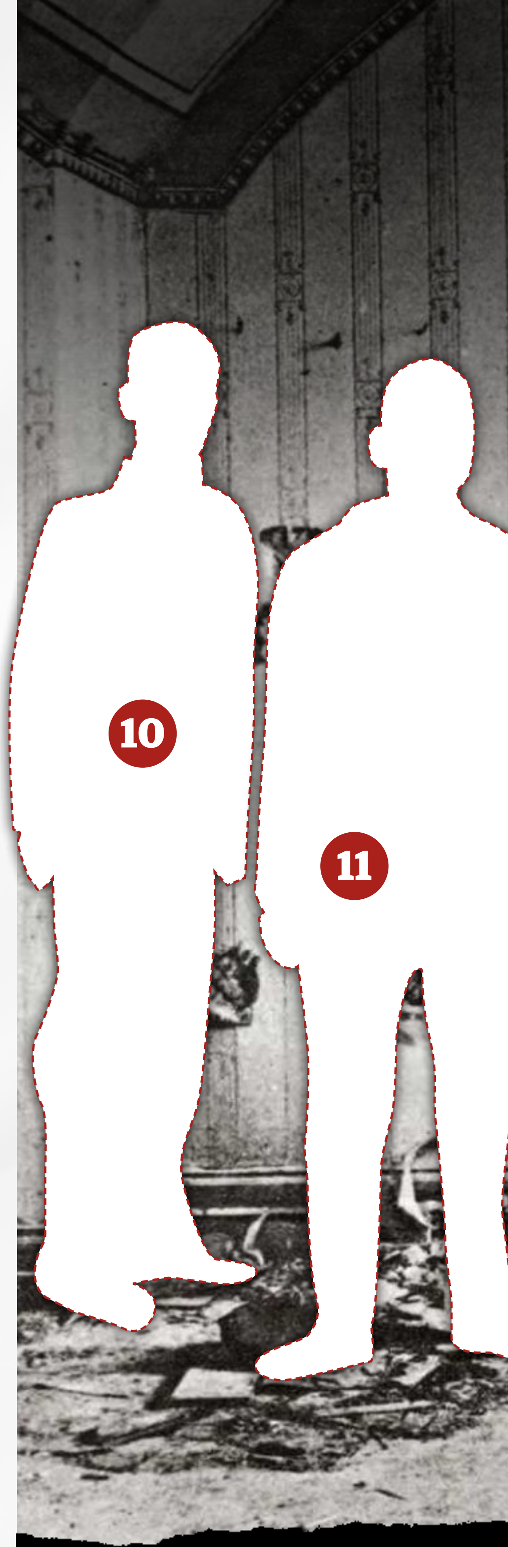
It took the outbreak of World War I to finally bring down the tsar. The first year of conflict proved disastrous for Russia, and in November 1915, Nicholas took command of the armed forces. This was a misguided decision. Hundreds of thousands died in the trenches. “Throughout his reign,” writes Orlando Figes, “Nicholas gave the impression of being unable to cope with the task of ruling a vast empire in the grips of a deepening revolutionary crisis.”

He certainly could not cope with commanding the armed forces, a task for which he was poorly qualified. Alexandra, meanwhile, interfered in governmental business on the home front while her relationship with her favourite, Rasputin, caused outrage among common folk and officials alike. Stories of sexual relations between the peasant and the tsarina, though unfounded, were rife. Nicholas, meanwhile, was forced to raise taxes to pay for the war. Foreign debt increased, as did inflation. When food shortages set in, the populace could take no more. The tsar’s days were numbered. Indeed, Figes points to a popular Russian joke that says the tsar himself should have been awarded the Order of the Red Banner for services to the revolution.

Once Nicholas abdicated and the Bolsheviks under Lenin took control of the country later in the year, they pledged to put ‘Bloody Nicholas’ on trial. Yet both he and his family were murdered. Was this because the Bolsheviks were worried that the White Army would take Ekaterinburg, liberate Nicholas and use him as a totem? As Figes notes, it is highly unlikely that the Whites would want such an unpopular and discredited figure as their ‘live banner’. Rather, he says, it was the idea of a trial that became problematic.

To put Nicholas in the dock, Figes says, was to presuppose the possibility of his innocence. “And in that case, the moral legitimacy of the revolution would itself be open to question. Nicholas had to die so that Soviet power could live.”

Duma messengers protected by armed guards during the Russian Revolution, 1917



Nicholas Alexandrovich Romanov

AGE AT DEATH: 50

The last tsar of Russia oversaw a disastrous war with Japan and the establishment of the duma. He took command of the army during 1915 and was asked to abdicate two years later.

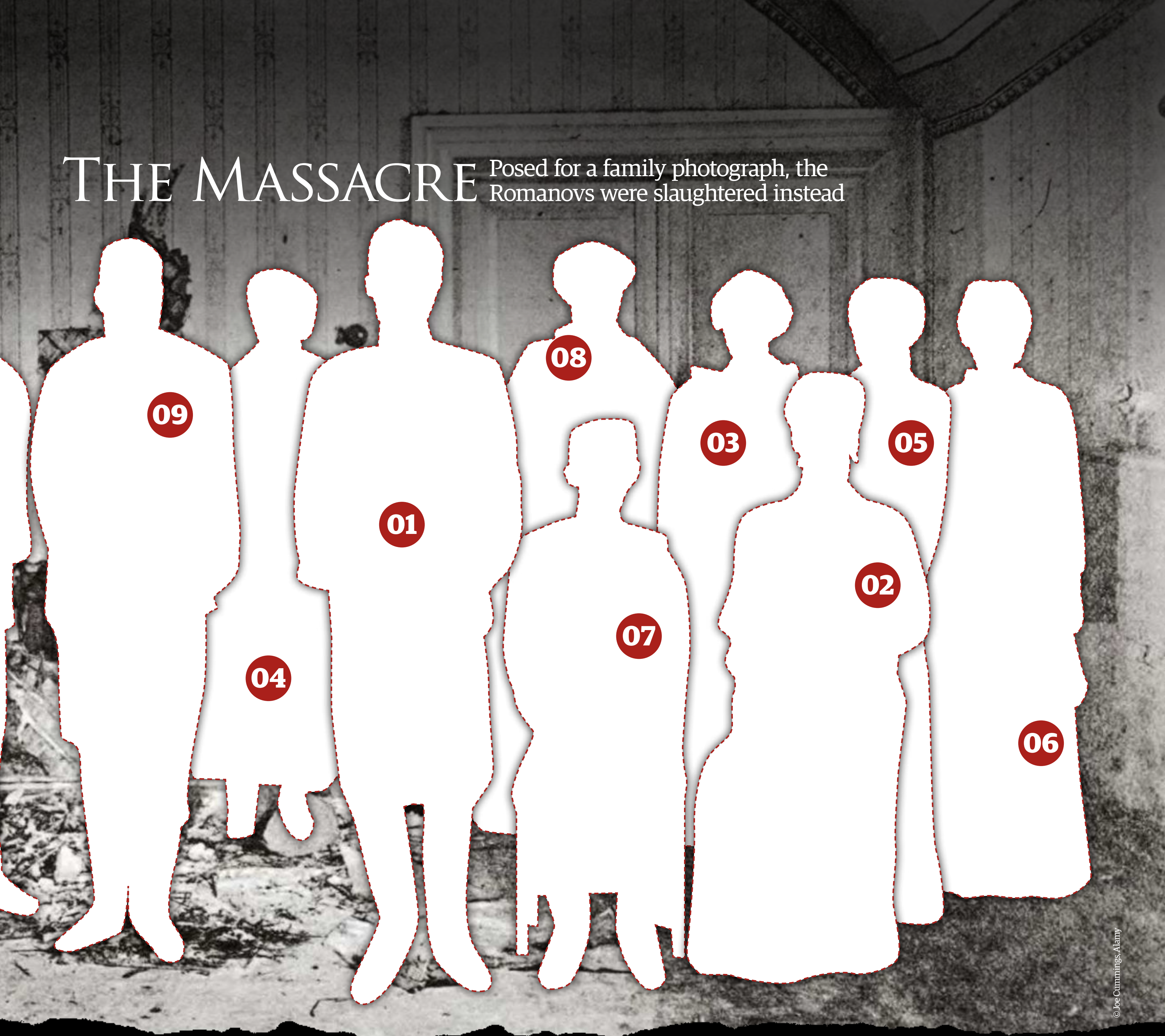
Alexandra Feodorovna

AGE AT DEATH: 46

A pious and spiritual woman, Alexandra was a devoted mother. She fell under the influence of Rasputin and meddled in governmental policy during WWI.

THE MASSACRE

Posed for a family photograph, the Romanovs were slaughtered instead



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03

Grand Duchess Olga Nikolaevna

AGE AT DEATH: 22

As a youngster, Olga was devoted to her father but often quarrelled with her mother. She was said to be a generous and charitable woman.

04

Grand Duchess Tatiana Nikolaevna

AGE AT DEATH: 21

Tatiana was said to be practical with a knack for leadership, her sisters calling her the 'The Governess'.

05

Grand Duchess Maria Nikolaevna

AGE AT DEATH: 19

Maria was not as lively as her three sisters, and though usually sweet natured, she could also be stubborn and lazy.

06

Grand Duchess Anastasia Nikolaevna

AGE AT DEATH: 17

The youngest daughter was energetic though sometimes in poor health. She had a close relationship with Rasputin.

07

Tsarevich Alexei Nikolaevich

AGE AT DEATH: 13

Alexei's haemophilia was severe and it was the tsarina's bid to help him that allowed Rasputin into the family fold.

08

Anna Demidova

AGE AT DEATH: 40

Demidova travelled with the tsarina as her maid when the family went into captivity. The executioners bayoneted her more than 30 times.

09

Dr Eugene Botkin

AGE AT DEATH: 53

Dr Botkin was said to have felt it his duty to follow the Romanovs into exile to help Alexei. He shared the Romanovs' 16 months of captivity.

10

Alexei Trupp

AGE AT DEATH: 59-60

Trupp was born in modern-day Latvia and became a footman in the royal household. Serving as Nicholas's valet, he shared the family's captivity and died quickly.

11

Ivan Kharitonov

AGE AT DEATH: 45-46

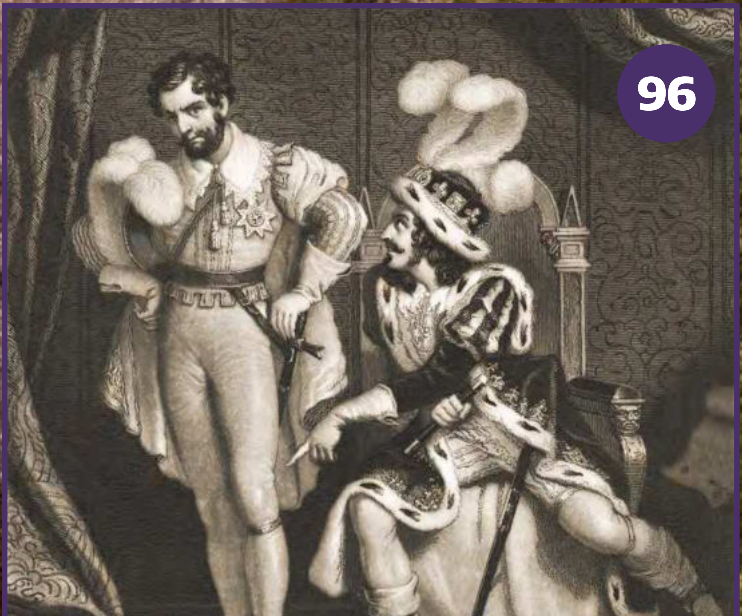
The cook shared the family's captivity and, like Trupp and Botkin, is thought to have died quickly during the executioners' initial salvo.

Secrets

116

122

102


96

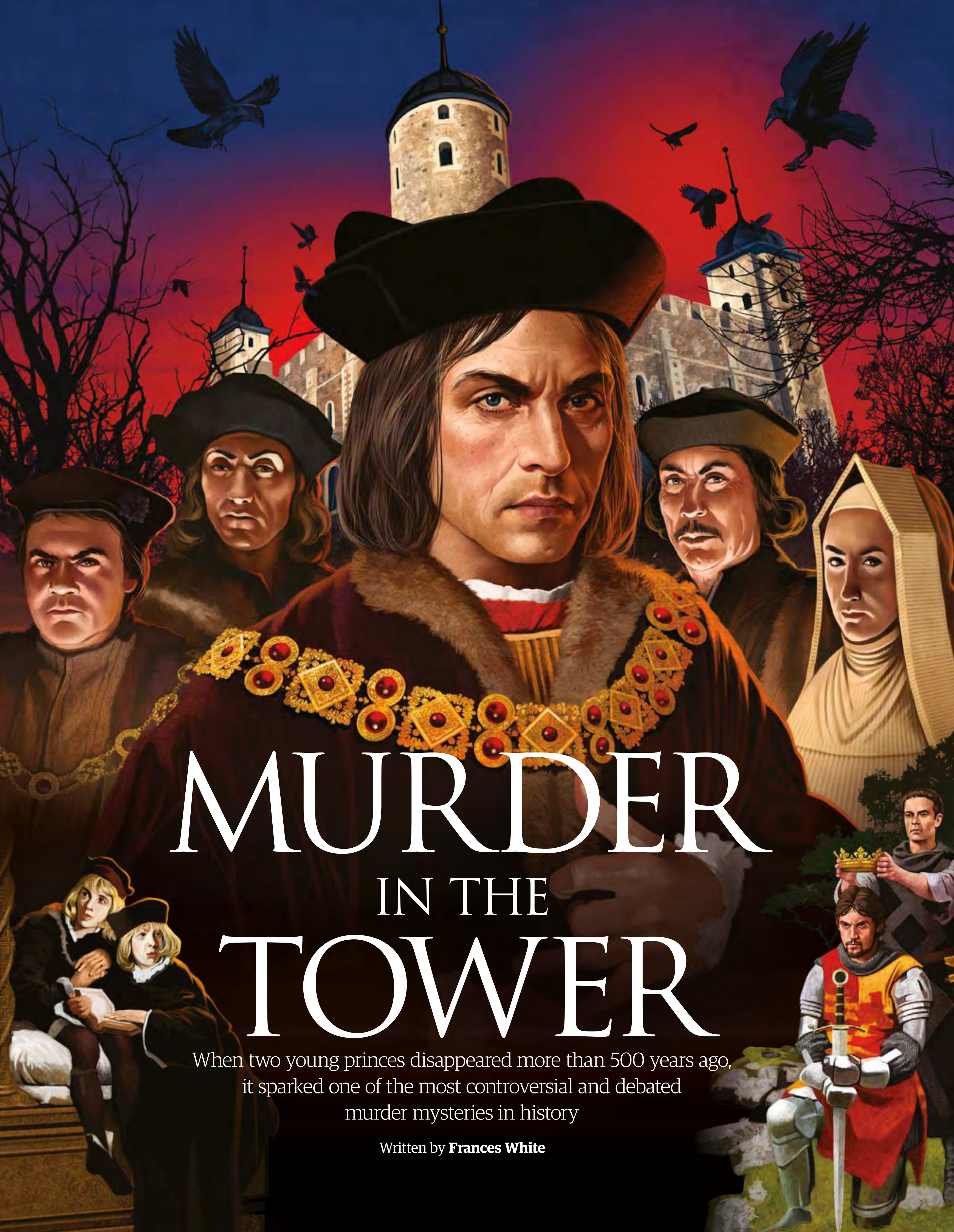
96 Murder in the Tower
What happened to the Princes in the Tower?

102 Victoria's Secrets and Scandals
The stories behind the controversies that affected the queen's reign

108 The Mysterious Death of Ludwig II
Accident, murder or suicide - what really happened to the mad king of Bavaria?

116 The Secret Prince
Prince John disappeared from history after his early death, but in life he was a treasured member of the House of Windsor

122 Murderous Mistress
While Edward VIII was known for his many affairs, he didn't expect one of his lovers to become a murderer



MURDER IN THE TOWER

When two young princes disappeared more than 500 years ago, it sparked one of the most controversial and debated murder mysteries in history

Written by **Frances White**

It was a balmy summer's night in the dark, twisting corridors of the Tower of London as Edward and Richard, the two young sons of York, slept soundly. A sob of silver moonlight fell upon their golden hair from a high window and all was silent. Fast asleep in bed, their hands clutching each other for comfort, they barely stirred as the door opened with a creak.

A figure slipped through the entrance. Stepping lightly, he swept up a feather pillow and slowly approached the beds before lunging forward, firmly holding the pillow over the older boy's face until his breathing stopped. Then he moved to the younger child. In a few minutes the deed was done, and the figure slunk back into the darkness and out of sight.

This story entered the nation's consciousness in late 1483, and it was retold over and over until it was accepted as fact. It was recounted by respected historians and made popular and immortalised by Shakespeare's play Richard III. But where did this rumour start? Was it really King Richard who masterminded such an atrocious crime? And how did the death of these two young children really benefit anyone?

The succession to the English throne has never been as precarious and uncertain as in the 15th century. Since 1154, the English crown had belonged to the Plantagenets, but when Edward III died in 1377, he left behind a series of sons that he had gifted with dukedoms. This created a breed of aristocrats who all had distant claims to the throne. Henry IV, the son of the fourth son of Edward III, deposed and most likely murdered his way to the top and formed the House of Lancaster, as well as making a host of enemies in the process. The line seemed to be stable but thanks to the inefficiency of his grandson, Henry VI, the conflict known as the Wars of the Roses broke out. It led to the eventual succession of the first Yorkist king, Edward IV, but his hold on throne was anything but secure.

Despite the instability and political turmoil, Edward IV was a stronger ruler than his predecessor and managed to establish some order in England. But this all came crashing down in 1483 when he died suddenly, leaving his 12-year-old son, Edward, as king. This wasn't an unprecedented move - children had 'ruled' before, usually through the guidance of regents - but it certainly wasn't ideal with so many would-be heirs snapping at his heels. Edward V was an independent boy; he was mature beyond his years and he had already been preparing to be king, but he was a child in a man's world, and it did not take long for people to take advantage of his fragile position.

While awaiting his coronation ceremony in the Tower of London with his younger brother, Richard of Shrewsbury, the throne was torn from beneath Edward before he even had a chance to sit on it. His father's marriage to his mother was ruled invalid as he had allegedly been pre-contracted to another beforehand, and their children, including young Edward, were declared illegitimate. Bastards were not judged worthy of the throne, so the crown fell into the hands of the next legitimate heir, his uncle - Richard III.

From this point on, the fate of the princes fades into myth and legend. Their last reported sighting was in late summer 1483, and from then the records seem to run dry. They were certainly never seen again in public, and soon rumours began to surface that the young boys had been murdered in the Tower. There was no evidence that the princes had been killed, save their sudden disappearance, but the search for the culprit has baffled and intrigued scholars for more than 500 years.

In 1674, a wooden box containing two small human skeletons was discovered near the White Tower, the suspected site of the boys' burial. Believed to be the remains of the princes, the bones were buried in Westminster Abbey under the order of Charles II. However, these bones have not yet been subject to DNA analysis, and many experts don't believe that they belong to the princes at all.

The problem with identifying the children's 'killer' is the era in which the murder supposedly occurred. It was a time when murder and treason were rampant and ambitions were sky high. There is not just one, but an array of possible suspects, all with their own motives for committing the crime. Contemporary accounts are unreliable due to the writer's own political alliances, and all of them contradict other versions of events.

Shakespeare's play popularised the figure of Richard III as a scheming, heartless hunchback, willing to murder anyone to secure his throne, but just how accurate is this? Richard had his reasons to do away with the boys, but so did a host of others, and even more people had reason to drag Richard's name through the mud.

Is the common belief that Richard is responsible simply encouraging a vicious rumour created by his enemies some 500 years ago?

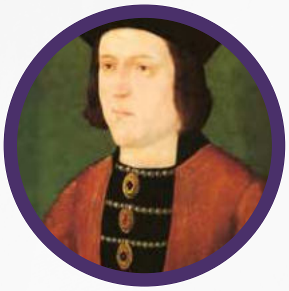
> "The search for the culprit has baffled and intrigued scholars for centuries"

COUNTDOWN TO MURDER

The final movements before the princes' disappearance

9 April 1483

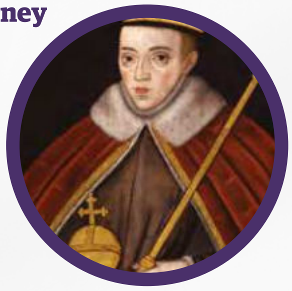
A king dies



After suffering from a short illness, Edward IV dies. The reason for his death is a mystery, with rumours of a possible poisoning as well as typhoid considered.

24 April 1483

The last journey



His son Edward V and the royal party leave their home at Ludlow to travel to London for his coronation.

4 May 1483

A royal entrance

Edward enters the capital with his uncle, Richard of Gloucester. They are greeted by the mayor and hundreds of citizens.

19 May 1483

Final residence

Edward is moved into the Tower of London, which is the usual place for kings to stay prior to a coronation.

16 June 1483

The brothers reunite

After previously being held with his mother and half-siblings in sanctuary in Westminster, Richard joins his brother at the request of the duke of Gloucester.

22 June 1483

A new king

Theologian Ralph Shaa preaches a sermon that declares all of Edward IV's children illegitimate. Three days later, Richard is declared king.

End of the summer

Last sighting

The children are withdrawn to the inner apartments of the Tower and are seen less and less. By the end of summer, they are presumed dead.

RICHARD III
RICHARD III

Suspect 01

Richard III

Motive: Secure his hold on the throne
Opportunity: Full control of and access to the Tower of London

The reasons why Richard would murder his nephews seem rather straightforward. After serving his brother loyally for years, upon his death, the jealous and ambitious Richard seized the opportunity to claim the throne as his own. He first did this by dismissing, arresting and eventually murdering many of the ministers appointed to his nephew, Edward V, claiming that he did so for his protection. He then placed Edward and his brother in the Tower and delayed the coronation. Two weeks later, the princes were declared illegitimate and Richard ascended the throne. Although they had been disenfranchised, keeping the boys alive when they had such a strong claim was too dangerous, so he had them murdered.

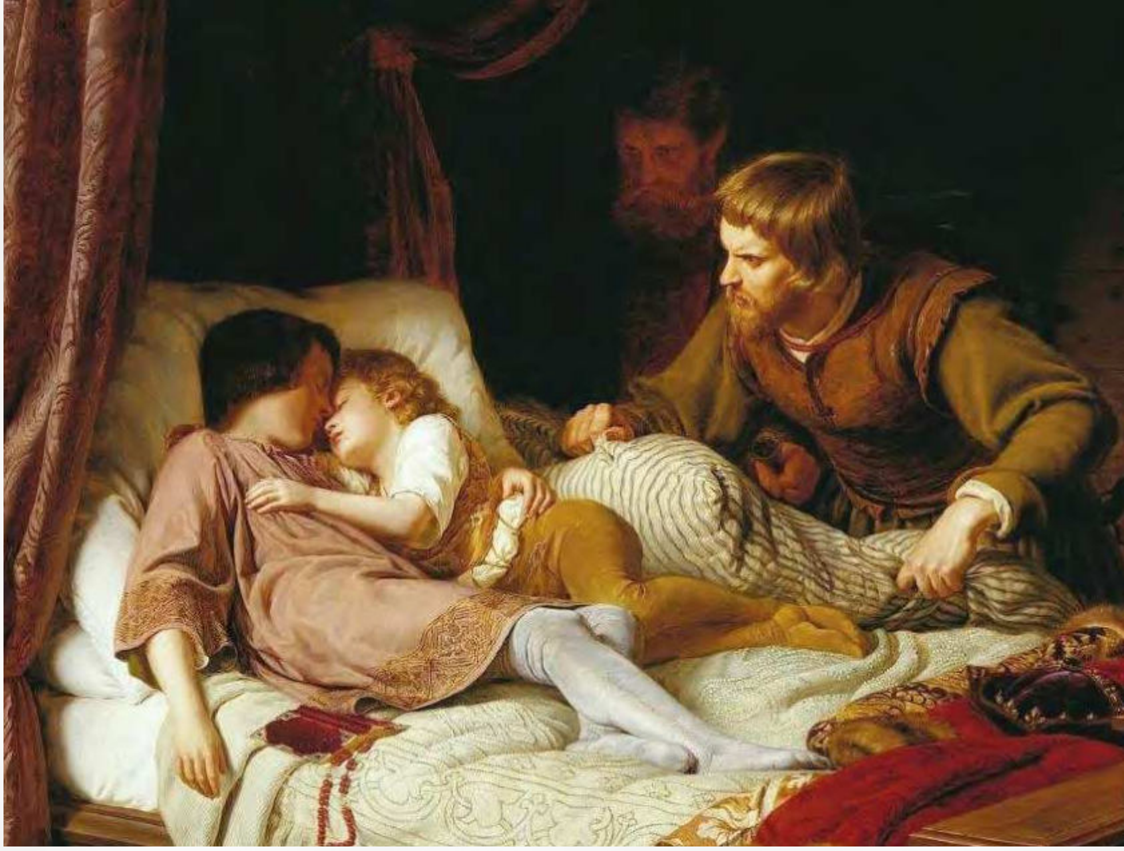
If the events were this clear-cut, there would be no question as to who was responsible, but unfortunately they are not. Strictly speaking, Richard didn't take the throne illegally – he was asked to by a parliamentary committee. The only part played by Richard in the bill that declared the boys illegitimate, *Titulus Regius*, was accepting it, perhaps indicating that Richard instead was a man who had no choice but to accept his role of king, or else the country would face a crisis of royal succession.

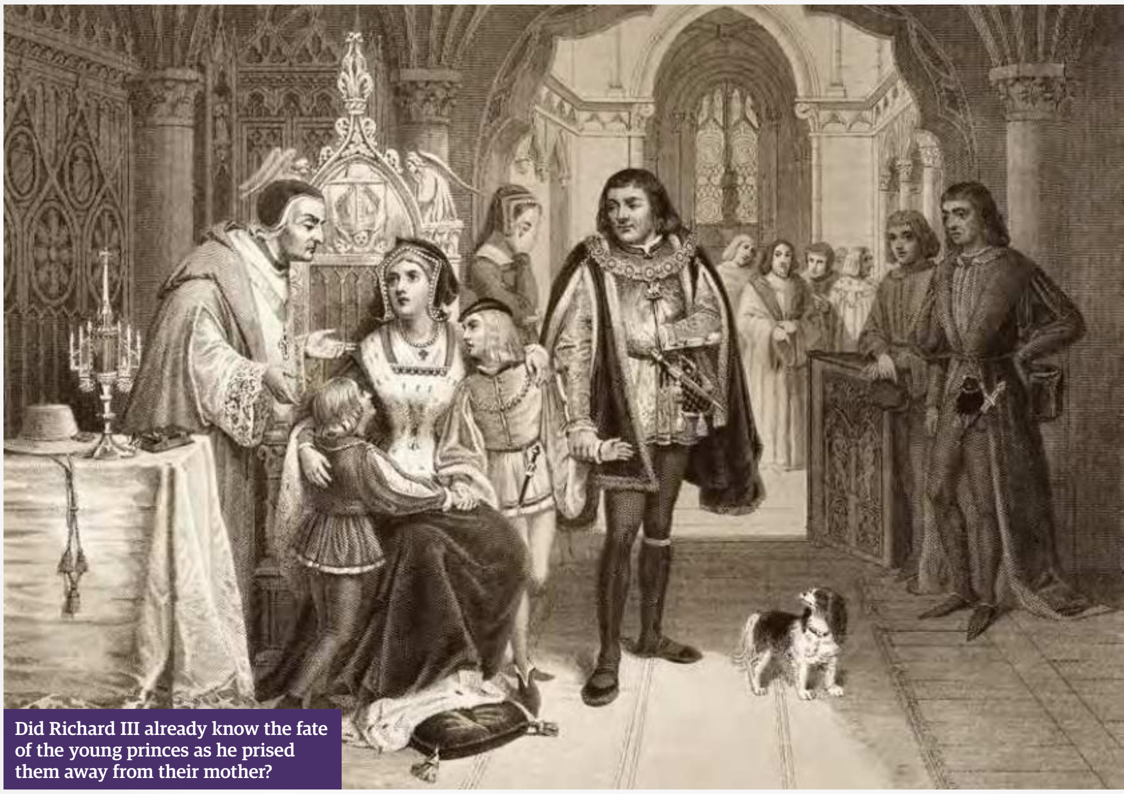
If Richard did indeed murder the princes to secure his own hold on the throne, then why did he not publicise their deaths? He could easily have claimed they died of illness but he did nothing of the sort. When faced with the vicious rumours that threatened to destroy his reign and certainly lessened the public's support of his claim, he avoided even acknowledging the boys' disappearance. If his motive was to strengthen his grip on the throne, he failed to take advantage of the opportunity he created.

Most crucially, there is no solid evidence that the princes were murdered at all. If people can disappear in the modern day, then it is certainly likely that they could in the 15th century. It is entirely possible that Richard had the boys transported out of the country, and this is the reason why he was unable to easily present them when he faced accusations of their murder. It would also explain the uncertainty that surrounded their fate and the lack of evidence.

For Richard to be innocent, at least one other man had to have been lying – Sir James Tyrell. Tyrell was a loyal servant of Richard III and was bestowed with an array of titles and grants once he was in power. When Henry VII was crowned, Tyrell was initially pardoned for being a supporter of Richard, but in 1501 he was arrested for treason and executed.

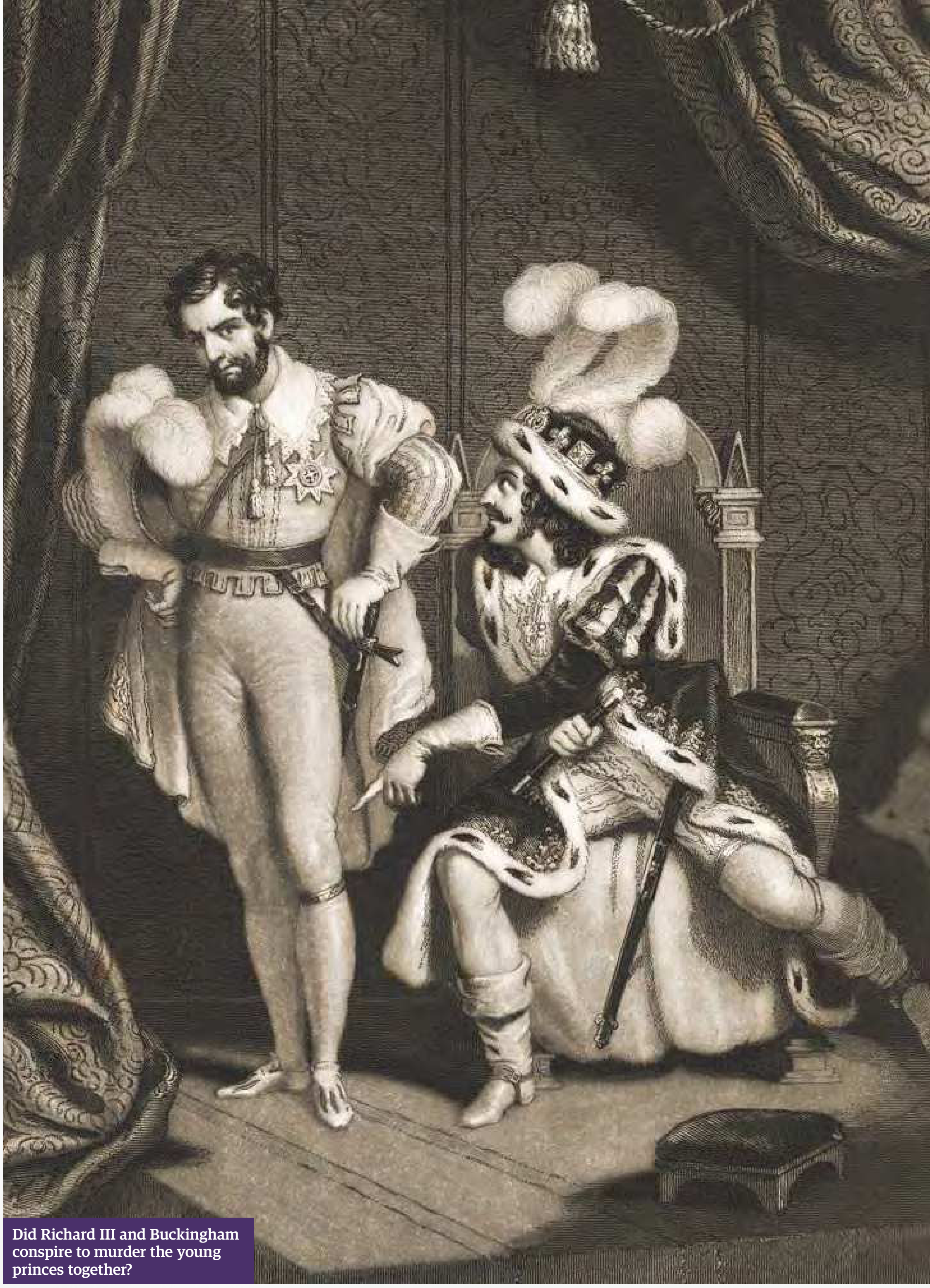
According to Thomas More, upon 'examination', Tyrell admitted that he had murdered the princes. Although we only have More's word for this, the fact that both King Henry and his wife attended Tyrell's trial – a very unusual event – indicates that Tyrell did in fact make this confession. Whether this was forced by torture or was actually true, we may never know – but it had huge implications for his master, Richard, firmly placing the murders at his feet for the next 500 years.





Did Richard III already know the fate of the young princes as he prised them away from their mother?

HENRY STAFFORD
HENRY STAFFORD



Did Richard III and Buckingham conspire to murder the young princes together?

Suspect 02

Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham

Motive: To claim the throne along with his lost inheritance

Opportunity: Only possible while under Richard's orders or by forced entry

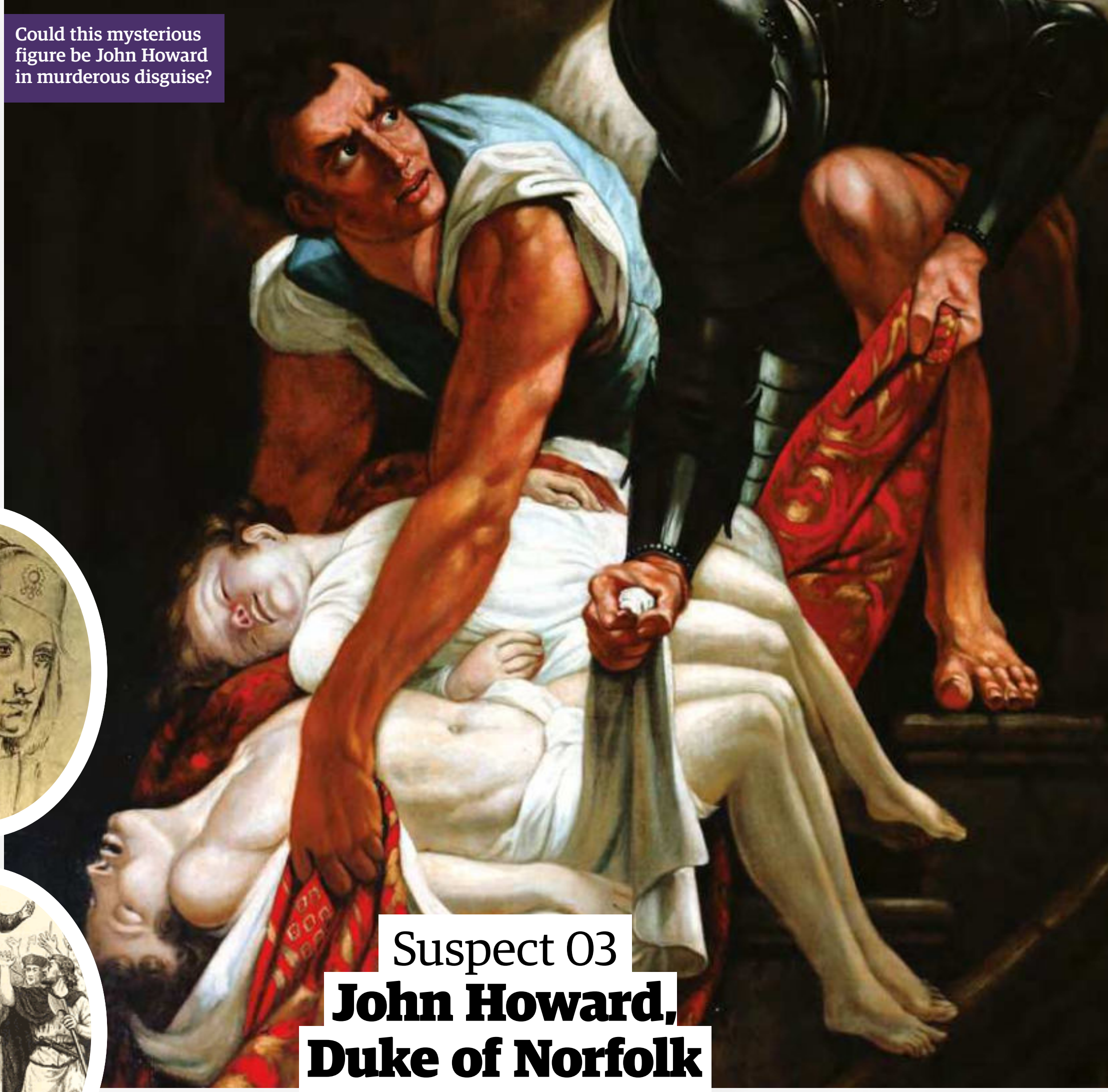
After Richard III, the duke of Buckingham, Henry Stafford, is one of the earliest suspects for the murder. He had multiple links to the throne but these were through the daughters of younger sons, making the chances of him claiming the crown very slim indeed. Despite his family fighting for the House of Lancaster in the Wars of the Roses, he went on to become the ward of Elizabeth Woodville, the wife of Edward IV. He was married to her sister, but this was not a happy union; he considered it an insult to be married to a woman of lower class and resented the Woodvilles from that point onwards. When Richard took guardianship of the young Edward, Buckingham was by his side. But what exactly did the duke have to gain from the princes' deaths?

One suggested motive is Buckingham's interest in the Bohun estate - worth some £1,100 annually. He had inherited the property from his great-great-grandmother Eleanor de Bohun, but Eleanor, and therefore Buckingham, only received half of the estate. Her sister inherited the other half and ended up marrying Henry IV. When Edward IV took the crown, the estate became crown property but Buckingham insisted it belonged to him. This desire to reclaim his estate certainly explains why Buckingham supported Richard's ascension, but not why he might have killed the princes, for the simple fact that Richard granted him his inheritance in July 1483, pending parliamentary approval.

Instead, a very common motive for murder is given to Buckingham's actions: ambition. He had acted as kingmaker for Richard, aligning with him the moment he came into power and guiding his hand to the throne. He was as entangled in the events that led the children to their deathbeds as Richard himself. He held Richard's train and staff on his coronation, perhaps thinking that he may stand in that position soon enough. In order to achieve this, he placed Richard on the throne and killed the princes either to begin a vicious rumour or to eliminate his first stumbling block to the crown. In autumn 1483, he unleashed an uprising against Richard that would eventually lead to their deaths.

Many have claimed that if he didn't act alone, Buckingham killed the princes on behalf of Richard, and the rebellion was a result of his disillusionment with his new king. It is impossible to prove whether Buckingham was acting out of guilt, ambition or malice when he led his rebellion. However, it seems peculiar that a man who knew the princes were dead would lead a rebellion demanding they be reinstated on the throne.

It was the rumours of their deaths that caused Buckingham to be replaced by Henry Tudor as leader of the rebellion. Perhaps strangest of all is the fact that when Buckingham was captured and tried, Richard did not accuse him of murdering the princes. With Buckingham at his mercy, it would have been the perfect time to implicate him for the murders he was aware he committed, clearing his own name in the process. But he did not.



Could this mysterious figure be John Howard in murderous disguise?

Suspect 03

John Howard, Duke of Norfolk

Motive: To claim his rightful inheritance
Opportunity: Constable of the Tower at the time

Howard was yet another member of the aristocracy who was descended from royalty: Edward I on his mother's side and King John on his father's. He was a staunch supporter of the House of York and was knighted by King Edward IV. He slowly made his way up the ranks, even carrying the crown to Richard III at his coronation. Howard's support of Richard alone isn't enough to accuse him of murder, but the benefits he apparently reaped because of his ascension certainly are. Just two days into Richard's reign, Howard received the lands and titles held by Richard of Shrewsbury. These lands, the 'Mowbray inheritance', had been given to Richard as 'compensation' after the death of his betrothed. This meant Howard was denied his inheritance and had not been compensated at all for this loss. Adding to this theory is the fact that it was Howard who encouraged placing Richard in the Tower with his brother – the Tower he was constable of. He was also devoted to Richard III, even dying on the same field as his king. If he had not acted alone to secure his fortunes, it is not impossible to believe that he acted alongside the king – agreeing to do away with the boys as both a favour and a means to claim what was rightfully his.

> "It is not impossible to believe that he acted alongside the king"

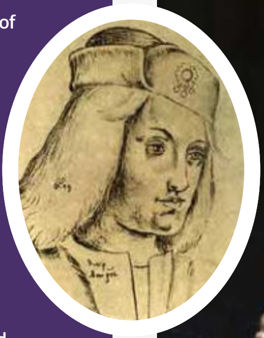
It seems Howard had both the means and the motive to commit the act, but this theory actually falls apart under closer scrutiny. Howard was not the all-powerful constable of the Tower – he held the second reversion of the post, making it unlikely that he could do as he wished there. In this case, we have to believe that Richard allowed Howard access to the Tower, but in reality their friendship was not as great as it seemed. It is a lot more likely that Howard's commitment was to the House of York, which had helped him ascend the social and political ladder, rather than to Richard himself. Such loyalty to a House at this time was a remarkable thing, and it is a little cynical to assume its source was shared blame for murder. Most damning of all is his motive. If he did indeed wish to claim his lands and titles, he would have only had to kill the current owner – Richard of Shrewsbury.

Why, then, would he also kill Edward V? The entire argument falls apart if we consider Howard only had 12 days to do away with them – the time between Richard's arrival at the Tower and when Howard was granted his estate. But both princes were reportedly seen after this date. Considering he had his title when they were seen alive, Howard really had no reason to kill them.

PRETENDERS OF THE THRONE

The princes' presumed murders didn't stop people coming forward claiming to be them

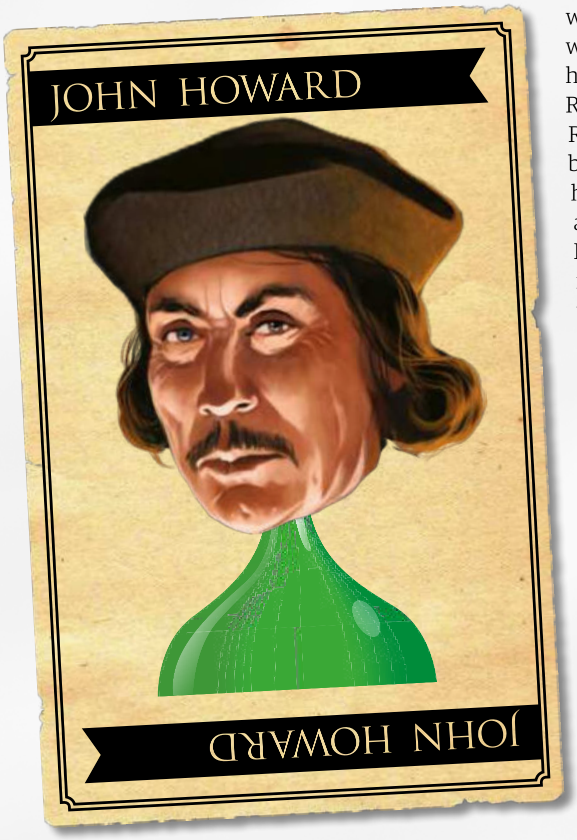
Perkin Warbeck

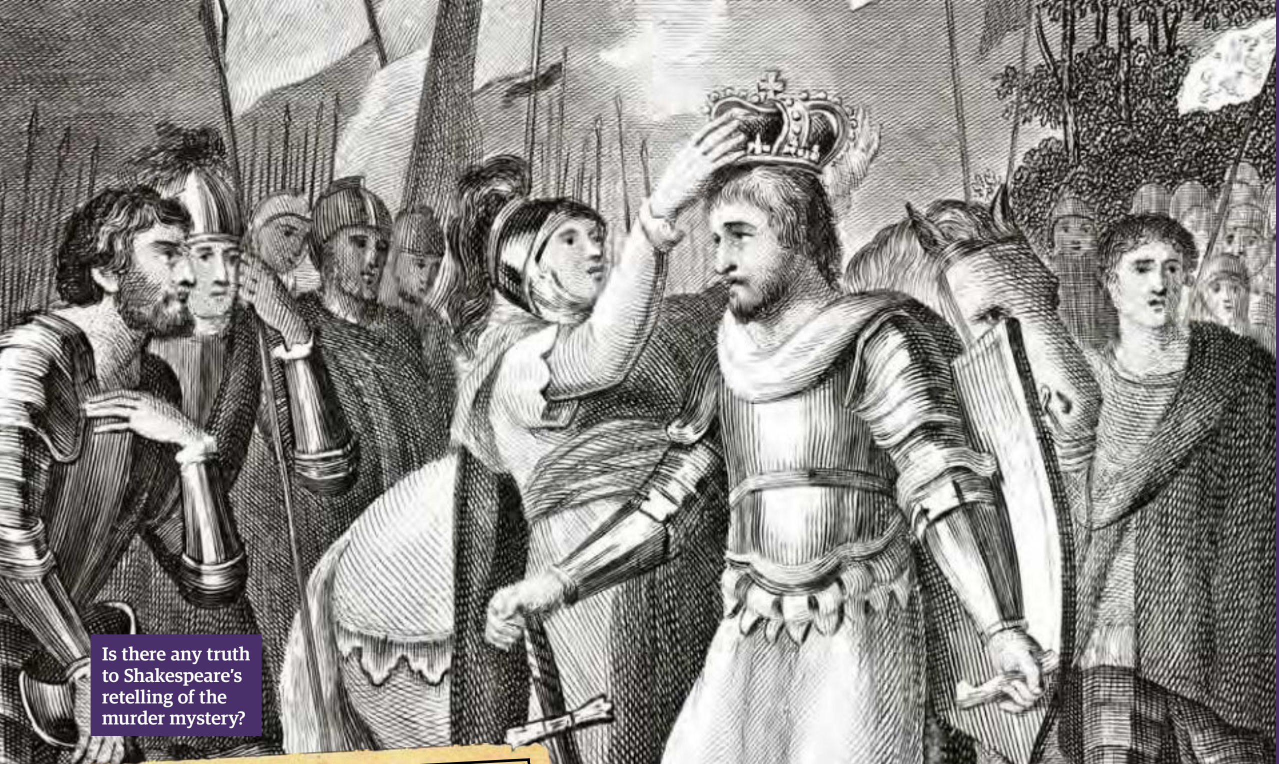


Warbeck claimed he was Richard in the court of Burgundy in 1490, saying that he had been spared by his brother's murderers due to his young age, but swore to not reveal his identity. His claim was supported by Richard's sister, Margaret of York, and he gained support from various monarchs, most notably James IV of Scotland. However, after hearing the king's army was advancing towards him, he fled. He was eventually captured and taken to the Tower of London after being paraded through the streets to be made an example of. He was imprisoned alongside Edward, Earl of Warwick, the nephew of Edward IV and Richard III, and when the two of them attempted to escape in 1499, he was hanged.

Lambert Simnel

When the young Simnel was taken in by a priest named Richard Simonds, the man noticed the alarming similarity between the boy and the sons of Edward IV. He made plans to present Simnel as Richard, but when he heard that Edward, Earl of Warwick, had died in imprisonment, he changed his claim and declared him as the earl instead. With a rebellion already planned by the Yorkists, Simnel became the figurehead and gained support in Ireland. However, his army was defeated by the kings and due to his young age. Simnel was pardoned and given a job in the royal kitchen.





Is there any truth to Shakespeare's retelling of the murder mystery?

A DEADLY RUMOUR

Margaret Beaufort, Henry VII's mother, is another name that has been linked to the murders, but a more compelling theory is that although she didn't kill them, she began the rumour that Richard did. With her focus on the interests of her son, Beaufort enlisted the help of Woodville and Buckingham to drive the autumn rebellion and place her son on the throne. The rumour of the boys' deaths and Richard's connection to it certainly started a domino effect that led to Henry VII's rule, and this very well may have been due to his mother, as the ultimate spin master, working behind the scenes to tarnish Richard's name and prompt people to flock to her son's side.

HENRY VII
HENRY VII

Suspect 04

Henry VII

Motive: Secure his hold on the throne
Opportunity: Access to the Tower upon becoming king

When Henry VII set his sights on the English crown, his claim was incredibly weak - there were almost 30 nobles with a more credible claim. He knew ascension would not happen through birthright, but instead conquest, and to achieve this he needed allies. He vowed to marry Elizabeth of York, daughter of Edward IV and elder sister to the two princes. By doing this, he gained the support of Lancastrians as well as the disenfranchised Yorkists.

But once he became king after the battle at Bosworth and was set to marry Elizabeth, he encountered a problem: Richard III had declared Edward IV's children illegitimate in *Titulus Regius*. Now that Henry was king, he could easily overturn it, which he did - even burning all copies to deny it ever existed. Although this returned legitimacy to his wife-to-be, it also meant that the princes were the legal claimants to the throne. This left Henry with no choice - he had to have the princes killed or lose his crown. It is argued that this happened not in 1483, as commonly believed, but in 1486.

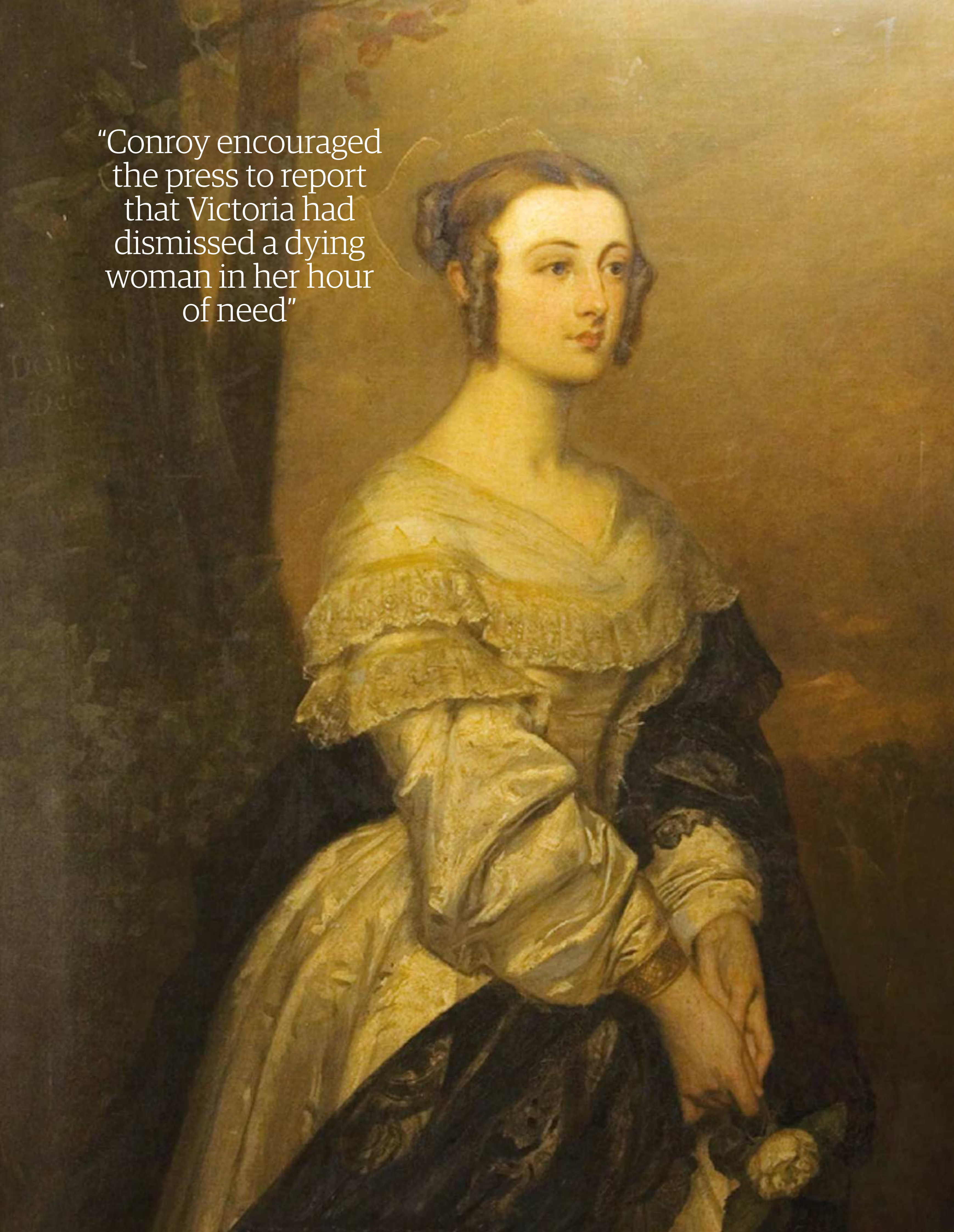
This date is supported by Tyrell's confession, as he received two pardons from Henry in 1486. This is an unusual occurrence, and Henry would later proclaim that Tyrell had indeed confessed to the murders - and as Tyrell was Richard's loyal servant, it was easy for him to shift the blame on his predecessor. This theory is also supported by Henry's treatment of the princes' mother, Elizabeth Woodville, who was deprived of her lands and fees.

It is certainly no secret that Henry made efforts to wipe out remaining Plantagenets, but it seems very unlikely that nobody would have mentioned the boys if they had survived three years longer than previously believed. For the early part of his reign, Henry faced constant rebellions from angry Yorkists; it is difficult to believe none of them would have accused him of this crime had it occurred during his time on the throne. Additionally, if they had survived until this date, why did Richard III not previously display them after being accused of their murder? This would have helped redeem his reputation and likely quell the rebellion, but he did not. It is also similarly unlikely that Elizabeth Woodville would have supported Henry's claim to the throne, as she did by agreeing to his marriage with her daughter, had she known her sons were still alive.

> "He had to have the princes killed or lose his crown"

Most revealing of all is Henry's reaction when pretenders of the princes emerged. When Perkin Warbeck claimed to be the young Richard, Henry was so worried that he made peace with France to prevent a rebellion. His actions were those of a nervous man, unlike his confident response when Lambert Simnel emerged posing as the earl of Warwick, who Henry knew was locked up in the Tower. This is a telling indication that Henry had no idea what happened to the princes. Considering Henry was 14 when he left England and didn't return until the Battle of Bosworth, it is more likely that Henry knew less about their fate than most; he never accused Richard of the act for exactly that reason. All Henry could do was assume and hope, for the sake of his throne, that they were dead.

© Alamy, Corbis, Joe Cummings



“Conroy encouraged the press to report that Victoria had dismissed a dying woman in her hour of need”

Victoria's treatment of the dying Lady Flora Hastings proved to be a disastrous public relations decision

VICTORIA'S SECRETS & SCANDALS

They may have been the very model of Victorian morality, but Victoria and her family weren't immune to a few embarrassments of their own

Written by **Catherine Curzon**

Though she has become synonymous with morality and ushering in the straight-laced, straight-faced Victorian era, Queen Victoria's royal household had plenty of scandals of its own. From freewheeling sons to rumours of illegitimate pregnancy and more, what went on behind closed Victorian doors was often far from respectable!

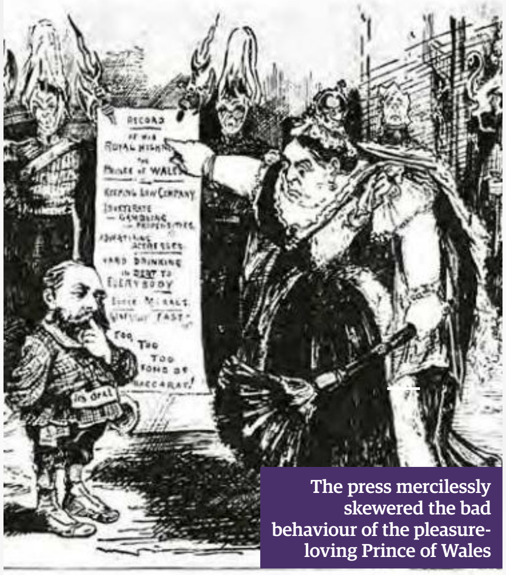
Queen Victoria had only been on the throne for a couple of years when she faced her first brush not only with scandal, but with the realities of maintaining good public relations. After a childhood spent in the oppressive household of her mother, the Duchess of Kent, Victoria's relationship with her only surviving parent had become strained to the point of virtual estrangement. Though both lived in Buckingham Palace, the Duchess' quarters were distant from the queen and her family, and Victoria was unwilling to let members of her mother's circle get too close.

One member of that circle was Lady Flora Hastings, an unmarried noblewoman who served as lady-in-waiting to the Duchess of Kent. She was also rumoured to be having an affair with the duchess' manipulative comptroller, John Conroy. Conroy was a busy man, having long been rumoured to be the duchess' lover. In fact some even believed that he was Victoria's real father.

So the young queen did all she could to keep her mother and the attendants who had once been her virtual jailers at arm's length. However, in 1839 Lady Flora began complaining of pain and a swollen abdomen. Victoria wrongly assumed that the unmarried woman was pregnant and believed that she finally had the opportunity to get rid of her once and for all. Victoria's confidante, Baroness Lehzen, along with other courtiers loyal to the queen, spread rumours of the supposed pregnancy and Lady Flora's reputation plummeted. In reply she wrote an open letter to a newspaper dismissing the rumours and blaming an unnamed foreign woman (Baroness Lehzen) for spreading gossip about her.

In order to silence the gossip frenzy, Lady Flora underwent a physical examination by court physicians and they confirmed that far from being pregnant, she was actually suffering with a fatal tumour on her liver. A repentant Victoria visited Lady Flora in the summer of 1839, just a week before she died, but the damage had been done to the young queen's public image. Conroy encouraged the press to report that Victoria had spread malicious rumours and dismissed a dying woman in her hour of need. He hoped that by doing this Victoria would appoint him her secretary and beg him to win back the support of the public. Even though her reputation with her subjects suffered, however, she did no such thing. Instead she learned the lesson the hard way and became a little more circumspect when it came to gossip in the future. For years after, though, the memory of her treatment of the unfortunate Lady Flora haunted Victoria.

As Lady Flora was growing weaker in May 1839, another potential catastrophe was about to rear its head in the shape of the Bedchamber Crisis. Lord

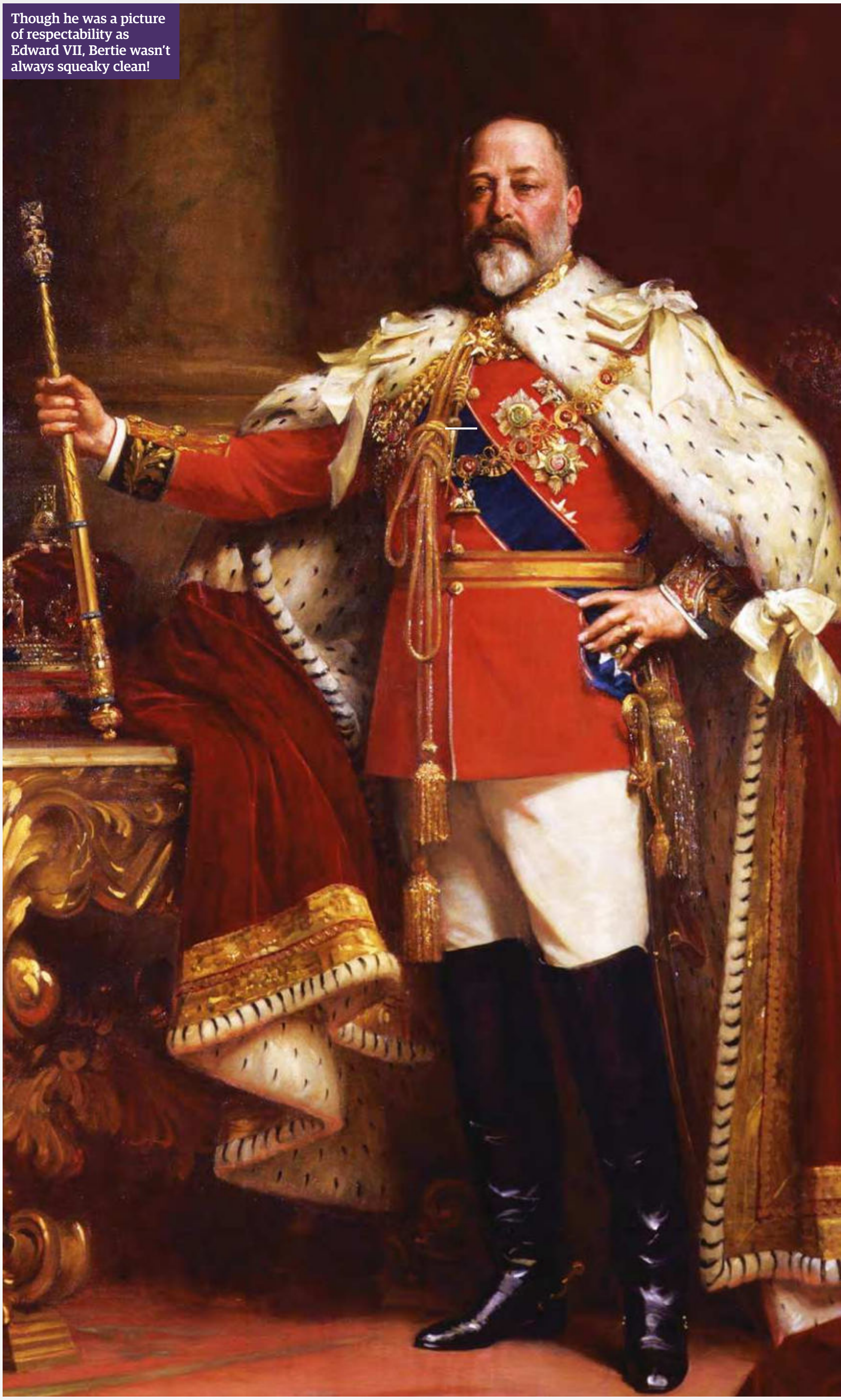

RECORD
OF HIS
ROYAL HIGHN
THE
PRINCE OF WALES
KEEPING LOW COMPANY
INVETERATE
GAMBLING
PROPENSITIES
ADMIRING ACTRESSES
HARD DRINKING
IN DEBT TO
EVERYBODY
TOO
TOO
TOO
FOND OF
BACCARAT!

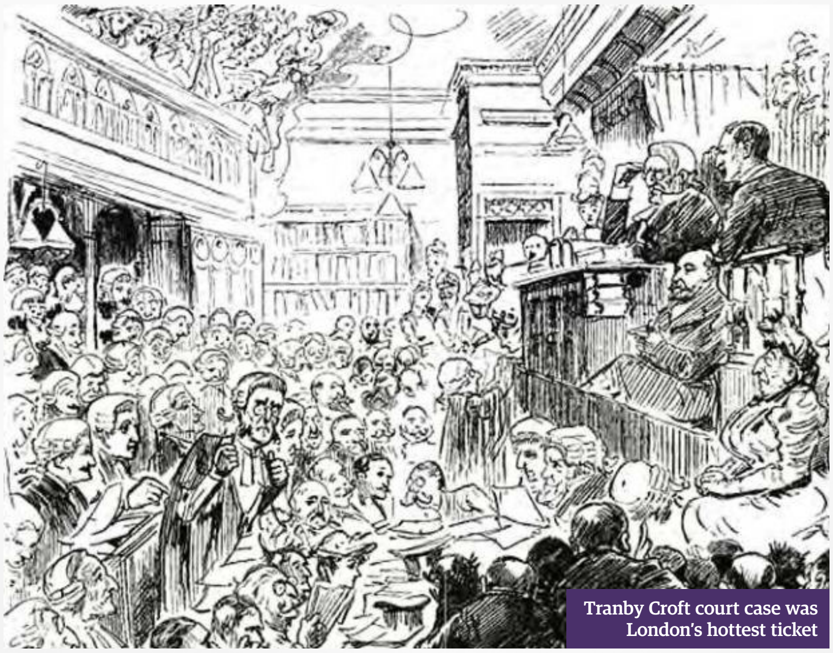
The press mercilessly skewered the bad behaviour of the pleasure-loving Prince of Wales

> "By far the biggest source of trouble in the lives of Victoria and Albert was their eldest son, Albert Edward"

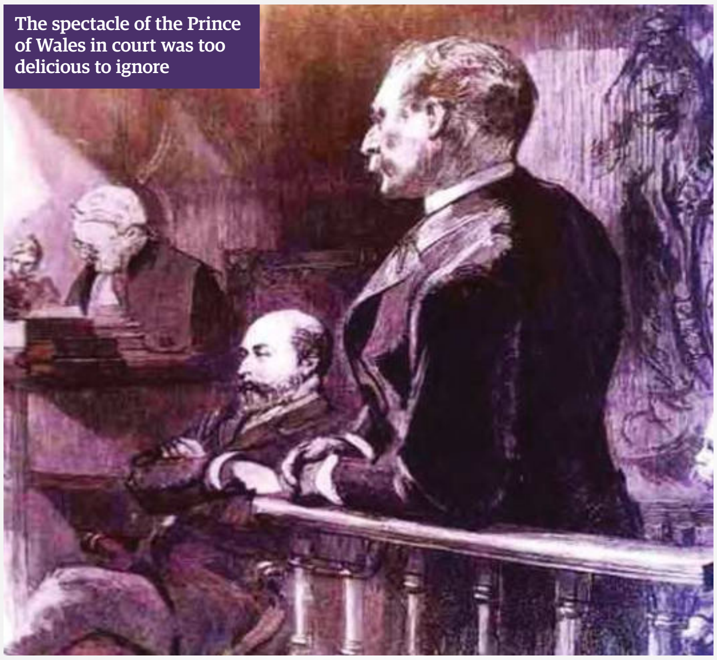
Melbourne, the Whig prime minister and one of Queen Victoria's most trusted allies, declared that he intended to resign. As an ardent Whig herself, if Victoria must have a Tory prime minister, she wanted the Duke of Wellington. The aging duke declined the position and told her that she must invite Robert Peel, the leader of the Conservatives, to assume the role.

Yet Peel knew that a Tory administration would be in the minority and enjoy little power in Commons. He told the queen that he would accept the role only if she dismissed a number of Ladies of the Bedchamber who were wives or otherwise related to senior Whigs. This wasn't a shocking move, as the prime minister traditionally played a part in the staffing of the royal household. Yet these women weren't just servants to the queen, they were close friends and Victoria, who had not been allowed friends as a child, wasn't about to sacrifice them to the whims of a politician. Though Peel wanted to replace just six of the 25 women, Victoria was sure that he intended to get rid of them all and she wouldn't be moved. Melbourne supported her and as a result, Peel refused to serve as prime minister


Though he was a picture of respectability as Edward VII, Bertie wasn't always squeaky clean!



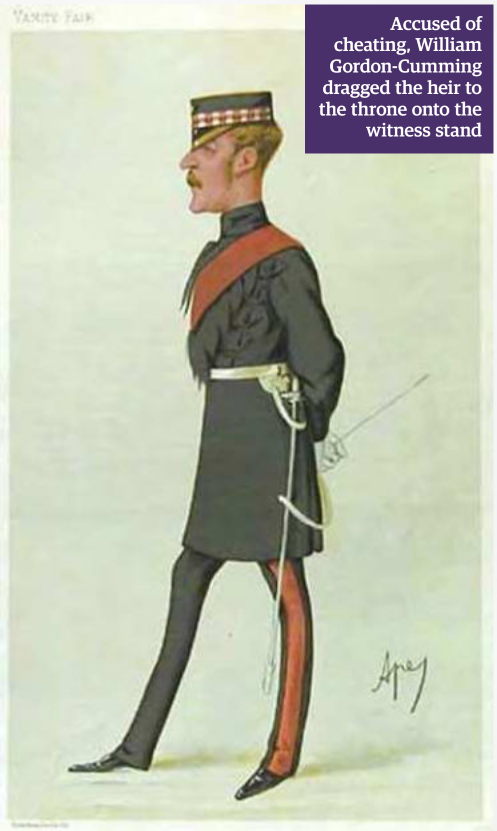
Tranby Croft court case was London's hottest ticket



The spectacle of the Prince of Wales in court was too delicious to ignore

if the queen wouldn't bow to his demands. Her friend and mentor, Lord Melbourne, was persuaded to return to office.

By the time Peel won a majority at the 1841 general election, Victoria was a wife and those confidantes who she had fought to protect had been shunted aside in favour of the company of her husband. This time she accepted Prince Albert's suggestion that she replace three of her ladies with Tory sympathisers. Later she reflected that she wished she'd listened to Peel's first offer but she had been inexperienced and far from the doughty queen she became.



Accused of cheating, William Gordon-Cumming dragged the heir to the throne onto the witness stand

By far the biggest source of trouble in the lives of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, however, didn't come from an outside source but was in fact their eldest son, Albert Edward, the Prince of Wales and later King Edward VII. Known as Bertie, he had struggled in childhood against his father's strict regime of education and discipline, and as soon as he was able to strike out alone, he was determined to make up for all the fun he hadn't had.

At 19 Bertie longed to join the army but as heir to the throne, his parents wouldn't hear of it. Instead they sent him to Ireland, where he could spend the summer undertaking military manoeuvres at Curragh with the Grenadier Guards. The soldiers were surprised to learn that the young man was still a virgin and they were determined to change that. They smuggled an actress named Nellie Clifden into the camp and in his diary entries for three dates in September 1861, Bertie recorded his sexual awakening in very short notes. He wrote, "NC 1st time, NC 2nd time, NC 3rd time". It was the start of a lifelong love of sexual decadence and the mysterious Nellie was the first of dozens of lovers who shared the bed of the Prince of Wales.

Bertie had intended to keep the tryst a secret but such hot gossip couldn't be kept under wraps. When he returned to England his parents sent him on to Germany to meet Princess Alexandra, the daughter of Prince Christian and Princess Louise of Hesse-Kassel. The couple hoped that she would be the perfect wife for the future king but while he was out of the country, somehow Victoria and Albert heard of his liaisons with Nellie. On their son's return to England, Albert travelled through a storm to confront the Prince of Wales in Cambridge, where he was studying. Just a few days later Albert's health failed and when he died two weeks after the trip of typhoid fever, Victoria was bereft. She blamed Bertie for Albert's death until the end of her days.

Nobody in Victoria's family caused her more annoyance than Bertie. Despite marrying Princess Alexandra, his love of the high life seemed to make him a magnet for scandal. Rumour had it that he was the lover of Lady Harriet Mordaunt, wife of Conservative MP Sir Charles Mordaunt, and that he had fathered a daughter with her. The little girl was born blind and Lady Harriet became convinced that this was divine punishment for her love affairs, a belief that saw her confined to an asylum. When the Mordaunts divorced, Sir Charles threatened to read out explicit letters from the prince or even force him to take the stand and though neither came to pass, society was ablaze with the gossip.

In fact it seemed as though society was often ablaze with gossip about Bertie, from the divorce of the Mordaunts to his long love affair with the famed Lillie Langtry, wrongly rumoured to be mother to another of his illegitimate children. Yet by far the most potentially damaging scandal involving Bertie was caused not by his love life, but by his passion for gambling. In September 1890 a game of baccarat erupted into what became known as the Tranby Croft affair, taking the chattering classes by storm.

The Prince of Wales was part of a group staying at Tranby Croft in Yorkshire as guests of wealthy shipping magnate, Arthur Wilson. Also among the party was Sir William Gordon-Cumming, a lieutenant-colonel in the Scots Guards. When the other attendees told Bertie that they believed Gordon-Cumming was cheating, Bertie told them that they should confront the soldier with their suspicions. This they did, promising to let Gordon-Cumming keep his reputation if he agreed to sign a binding document promising that he would never play cards again. Gordon-Cumming agreed to this stipulation but in 1891 somebody leaked the story of his cheating to the press and outraged at this,

Prince Eddy's name was implicated in what at the time was a shocking homosexual scandal the lieutenant-colonel took the journalist to court, demanding a retraction.

Arthur Wilson was charged with defamation and among the witnesses called to testify was the Prince of Wales. No heir to the throne had been in court since 1411 and the court case became London's hottest ticket. Though Gordon-Cumming lost the case, his reputation and his commission, the damage to Bertie was considerable too. His so-called Marlborough House social set came under intense scrutiny and the public demanded to know exactly what the heir to the throne was getting up to on the public purse. It was one more nail in the coffin of the prince's relationship with Victoria and he had no choice but to rein himself in, even going so far as to all but abandon his beloved gaming tables.

Bertie's son, Albert, was to bring the aging queen some fresh headaches. Eddy, as he was known, had little interest in learning but like his father, he was keen to embrace more physical pursuits. He was caught up in the so-called Cleveland Street scandal that erupted when a brothel was found to be procuring young men for the illustrious gentlemen of London. In a time when homosexuality was illegal, the influence of some of those named as clients meant that the press was reluctant to report on the case but gossip spread that one of the supposed clients was none other than Lord Arthur Somerset, the head of Eddy's stables.

When Somerset mysteriously went abroad with the royal family, the gossips soon whispered that the royal family had arranged his safe passage out of the country in return for his silence. The whispers got louder when those who were prosecuted received extremely light sentences, suggesting that someone with serious influence had intervened to ensure that the minimum embarrassment was caused to the establishment. Had Eddy been prosecuted or outed as a homosexual, the royal family might never have recovered from the scandal. It was a far cry from the morally unblemished family Victoria and Albert had once envisioned.

Victoria commissioned a life-size statue of John Brown after his death, which was erected at Balmoral

Eddy died in 1892, but not before he had been implicated in the suicide of a heartbroken Gaiety Girl named Lydia Miller with whom he had been having an affair. However, it wasn't only the princes who seemed to attract scandal – Princess Louise, Victoria and Albert's daughter, was rumoured to have had an affair with her brother's tutor and her mother's secretary, Arthur Bigge.

Even Victoria herself wasn't immune from scandal in her later life and her famed friendship with her Scottish aide, John Brown, led some to believe that they were lovers or even secretly husband and wife. The two were inseparable and certainly devoted to one another. They slept in adjoining bedrooms and Victoria's children referred to Brown as "mama's lover", but there is no evidence that an affair ever occurred between them. Of course, that doesn't mean for certain that it didn't happen and when Victoria died she left instructions that she should be buried with a photo of Brown, as well as his mother's wedding ring, which he had given to her years before. The queen, it seemed, may well have had some scandalous secrets of her own.

There were rumours that Victoria's relationship with her Scottish aide, John Brown, was more than strictly professional

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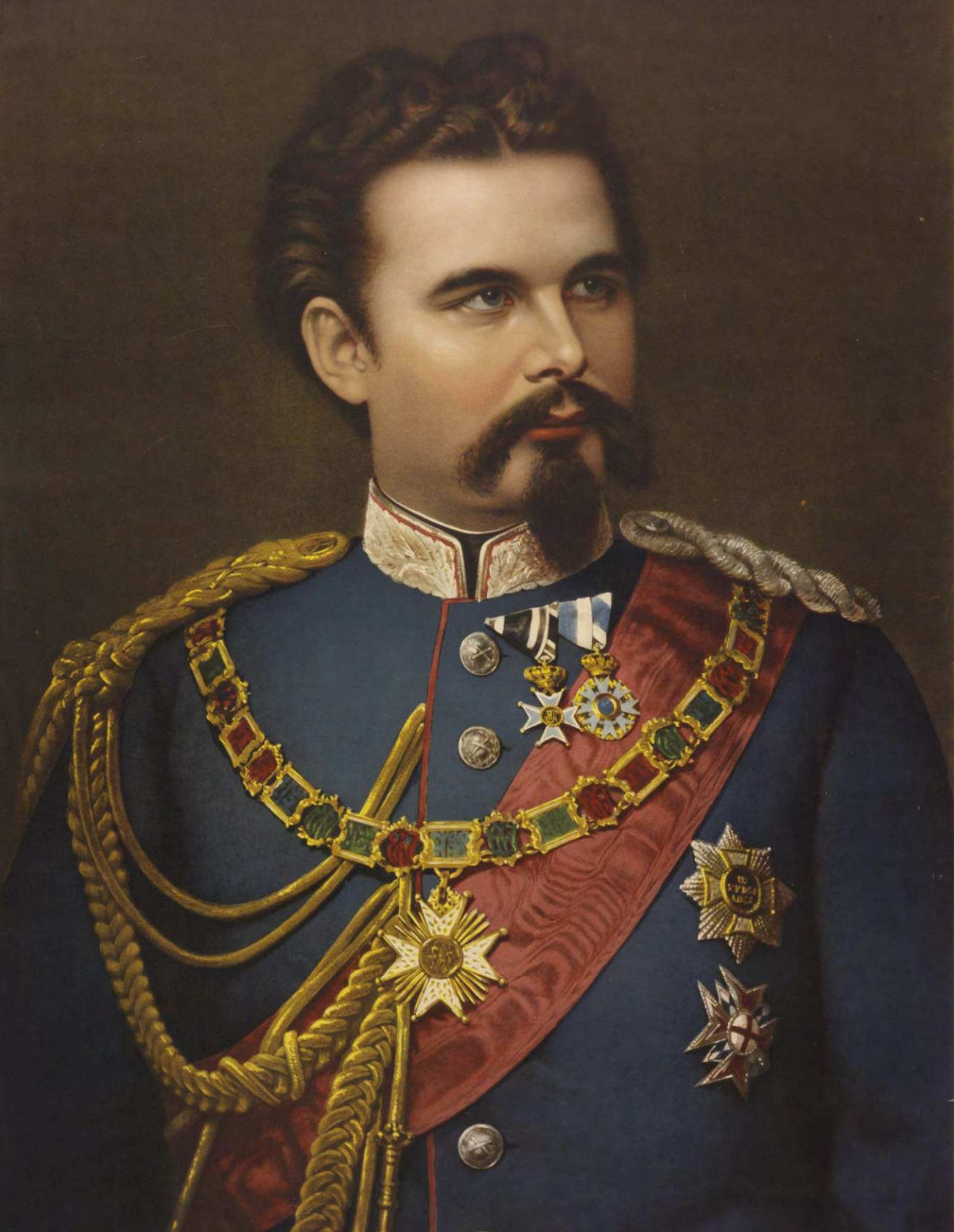


THE MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF LUDWIG II

What happened to the mad king of Bavaria?

Written by **Ann Marie Ackermann**

A disturbing history swirls under the placid surface of Bavaria's Lake Starnberg. King Ludwig II and a psychiatrist/expert witness met their untimely deaths in the waist-deep water of the lake in 1886, and no one knows exactly how. Some Bavarians say it was a suicide; some say it was an accident; others say murder. Over 130 years later, we know a little more about Bavaria's greatest unsolved mystery. Historians have rooted around in the archives and modern forensic analysis has dissected the evidence, so what can we now say about that fateful night of 13 June 1886?

Ludwig's downfall began in part with his character and in part with his debts. Even as a young prince, he withdrew into his own fantasies, and art, music and architecture interested him far more than government ever could. Once he became king in 1864 at the age of 18, those traits found their expression. Ludwig's patronage of Richard Wagner likely saved the composer's career, while the crown jewels of Bavaria's royal architecture were Ludwig's legacy: he built Neuschwanstein, Linderhof and Herrenchiemsee, now three of Germany's most popular tourist destinations, with the former cited as Walt Disney's inspiration for *Sleeping Beauty*'s castle. He also planned three more palaces, but by 1885 he'd accumulated massive private debts, which his uncle, Luitpold - next in line to the throne - agonised about inheriting.

Increasing doubts about Ludwig's ability to rule focused on mismanagement of money, and his attempts to find additional funding crossed the line into criminal conduct. Never married, Ludwig became more and more isolated. Rather than meeting with his ministers in Munich, he much preferred living in his fairy-tale palaces, running the government by correspondence.

By 1885, a crisis developed in Ludwig's cabinet. Luitpold and the Bavarian ministers came to an agreement: Ludwig's rule needed to end, and there was only one way to do it. The Bavarian constitution didn't provide for a king's impeachment based on mis-, mal- or nonfeasance, but it allowed for a king's removal if a disability lasting longer than a year prevented the performance of his duties. In March 1886, the cabinet asked Doctor Bernhard von Gudden, Germany's most prominent psychiatry professor, to

Neuschwanstein Castle, where Ludwig was seized make a diagnosis and prognosis. Unfortunately, it was the beginning of the end for both the king and the doctor.

The medico-legal question Doctor Gudden addressed was not whether the king was insane, but whether he was capable of ruling - the two standards were very different. Under the Bavarian law, incapacity to act under private, civil law would have, of necessity, deemed a person unfit to rule. But the converse wasn't true. Because ruling a country required special skills above and beyond daily living, the legal definition for incapacity to govern cast a wider net, which gave Doctor Gudden more latitude in making his diagnosis.

The ministers collected witness statements and documentary evidence for Doctor Gudden to prove Ludwig incompetent, but it was a one-sided affair. They even fished correspondence and orders from the king's waste bin. On 8 June, without evaluating exculpatory evidence or examining the king, Doctor Gudden's team diagnosed him with chronic paranoia that interfered with his ability to rule. Luitpold took the reins of the government as prince regent and ordered for Ludwig to be arrested and confined for medical treatment.

In the early hours of 12 June 1886, a government commission seized Ludwig at Neuschwanstein and transported him to Castle Berg on the shores of Lake Starnberg. To prevent his escape, medical personnel removed the door handles from his room and barred the windows. Gendarmes patrolled the grounds. The adjacent town of Berg was put under martial law; the police forbade citizens to leave their homes after dark.

Although Doctor Gudden acted as an expert witness, he and his team of doctors had developed a treatment plan emphasising rest, social contact and regular exercise with walks. Ludwig offered no resistance and by all appearances was a cooperative patient. But that may well have been a ruse.

When the clocks struck midnight in Munich that night, soldiers and palace servants swore they saw a ghost flitting through both Ludwig's place of confinement, which had been the traditional home of the Bavarian royal family in Munich, and through the ancestral portrait gallery in the Schleissheim Palace. According to legend, the spectre - a black-clad lady - was a messenger of death. It's unclear whether either king or doctor had any inkling, but they had only a few hours to live.

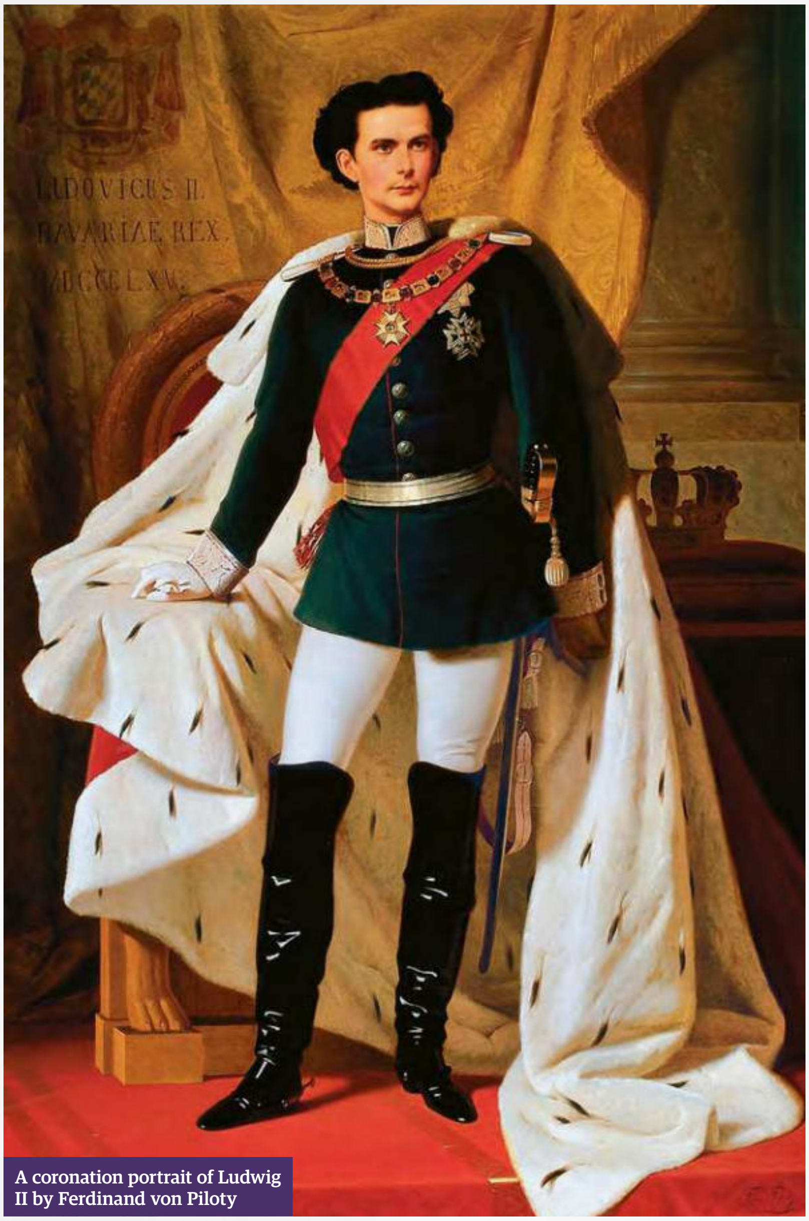
Doctor Gudden and Ludwig's first walk that morning, on 13 June, passed without incident. They strolled through the castle grounds along the lakeshore, followed by a male nurse for security. Around 6.30pm, they set off for another walk despite bad weather. It was the last either would ever take. This time, Doctor Gudden asked the nurse not to accompany them. His request puzzles historians today because it violated his own psychiatric standard of care.

When the king and physician didn't return to Castle Berg as planned, the castle personnel and gendarmes launched a search. At 10.30pm, the party found Ludwig's two overcoats and an umbrella between the path and the lake. Next, it found both their hats bobbing in the water on the shoreline. Fearing that the king and the doctor might be in the water, a doctor and the castle steward ran back to town to fetch a local fisherman to row them out to the scene. Between 20 to 25 paces from the shoreline, they found the bodies of Ludwig and Doctor Gudden floating next to each other face down in the water, their backs bobbing above the surface.

The search party's doctor started artificial resuscitation on the king as soon as the bodies were pulled aboard the boat. Once they'd paddled ashore, he continued resuscitation until signs of rigor mortis set in. He pronounced both men dead at 11.35pm. Their bodies were laid out at Castle Berg overnight. Ludwig's pocket watch had stopped at 6.54pm and Doctor Gudden's at 8.06pm.

An autopsy performed on Ludwig two days later didn't reveal the cause of death - aside from a scrape on the knee, the body had no visible injuries, and his lungs contained no water. No autopsy was performed on Doctor Gudden, but physicians who made an external examination of his body found a lump above his right eye and scratches on his nose. Doctor Gudden was also missing part of a fingernail that an investigating magistrate later found on Ludwig's overcoat. Those injuries, the magistrate concluded, pointed to a fight between the king and the doctor.

Police made no attempt to cordon off the death scene from onlookers. Over the following days, curious spectators descended on the shore of Lake Starnberg from both land and water, looking for footprints and other clues to shed some light on the mystery. One of them found a second umbrella near the first. While some spectators held official roles in the investigation of the deaths, others did not, and a visiting Prussian diplomat and a school student also described what they thought were the king's footprints. Each came up with a different scenario for what could have happened.


LUDOVICUS II.
BAVARIAE REX.
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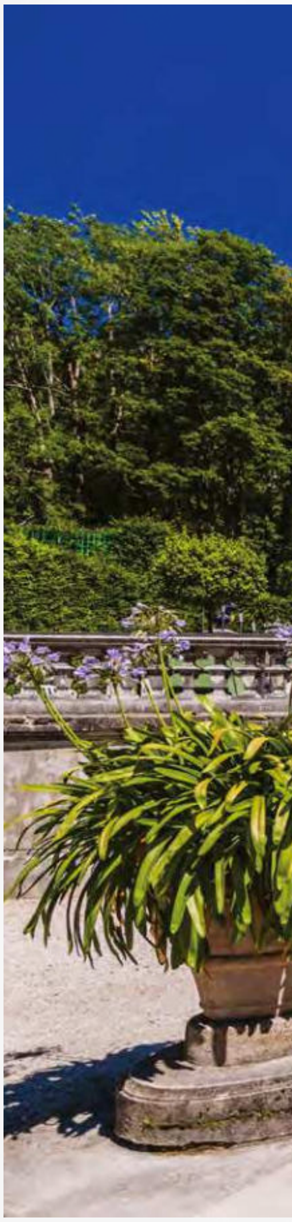
A coronation portrait of Ludwig II by Ferdinand von Piloty



Linderhof Palace was the only one of Ludwig's grand palaces to be completed during his lifetime

© Alamy

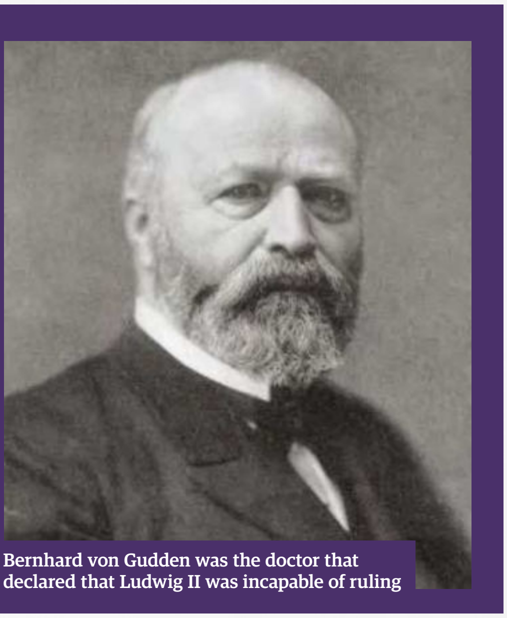
WAS LUDWIG II REALLY INSANE?

Was the mad king of Bavaria as insane as he's made out today? Probably not. There are three reasons why.

First, Doctor Gudden's expert opinion violated ethical standards: no psychiatrist may render a diagnosis without first examining the patient. A doctor must take care that evidence supporting a diagnosis is as objective as possible. Physicians followed those tenets already in 1886. In contrast, Doctor Gudden based his diagnosis on evidence gathered by Bavarian ministers who were opposed to Ludwig and didn't take contradictory opinions into account.

Second, some of the evidence put forth for Ludwig's insanity in 1886 wouldn't meet psychiatric standards today. His dream of building a flying machine proved realistic within two decades of his death; had Ludwig lived another 17 years, he would have seen that dream realised in the Wright brothers' aeronautical experiments. Photographs of Ludwig contradict Doctor Gudden's claims of small brain and head sizes, which 19th-century scientists took as evidence of mental deficiency. Ludwig's head size appears normal in photographs, though, a modern physician says. Post-mortem dehydration would account for the slightly smaller-than-average brain size found at autopsy.

Third, a German psychiatry professor reviewed the evidence and disagrees with Doctor Gudden. Doctor Heinz Häfner says Ludwig II was fit to rule. He managed his administrative and political duties until the day he was deposed. Häfner did find evidence of a narcissistic personality, which, he claims, is common among royals, but the disorder wouldn't have interfered with Ludwig's ability to rule. A bout of meningitis in Ludwig's infancy likely caused the spot of calcified scar tissue found in the membranes covering his cerebrum in autopsy. That scarring probably produced his headaches, insomnia and an altered sleep schedule, but cannot be seen as evidence of psychiatric illness. Another autopsy finding concerned a lack of teeth. Ludwig was missing all his upper teeth and most of his lower. He wore dentures, which would've made speaking and eating uncomfortable, Doctor Häfner claims, and would have accounted for the king's social withdrawal toward the end of his life.



Bernhard von Gudden was the doctor that declared that Ludwig II was incapable of ruling

THE THEORIES OF LUDWIG'S DEATH

Four theories were put forward to explain the king and his doctor's death

Black Footsteps

The investigating magistrate's crime scene inspection the morning after the deaths revealed a double set of footprints leading from the shore and converging at the end of the gravel bed, marked in black. After that point, drag marks from the bodies' feet indicate the direction in which the bodies floated.

Blue Footsteps

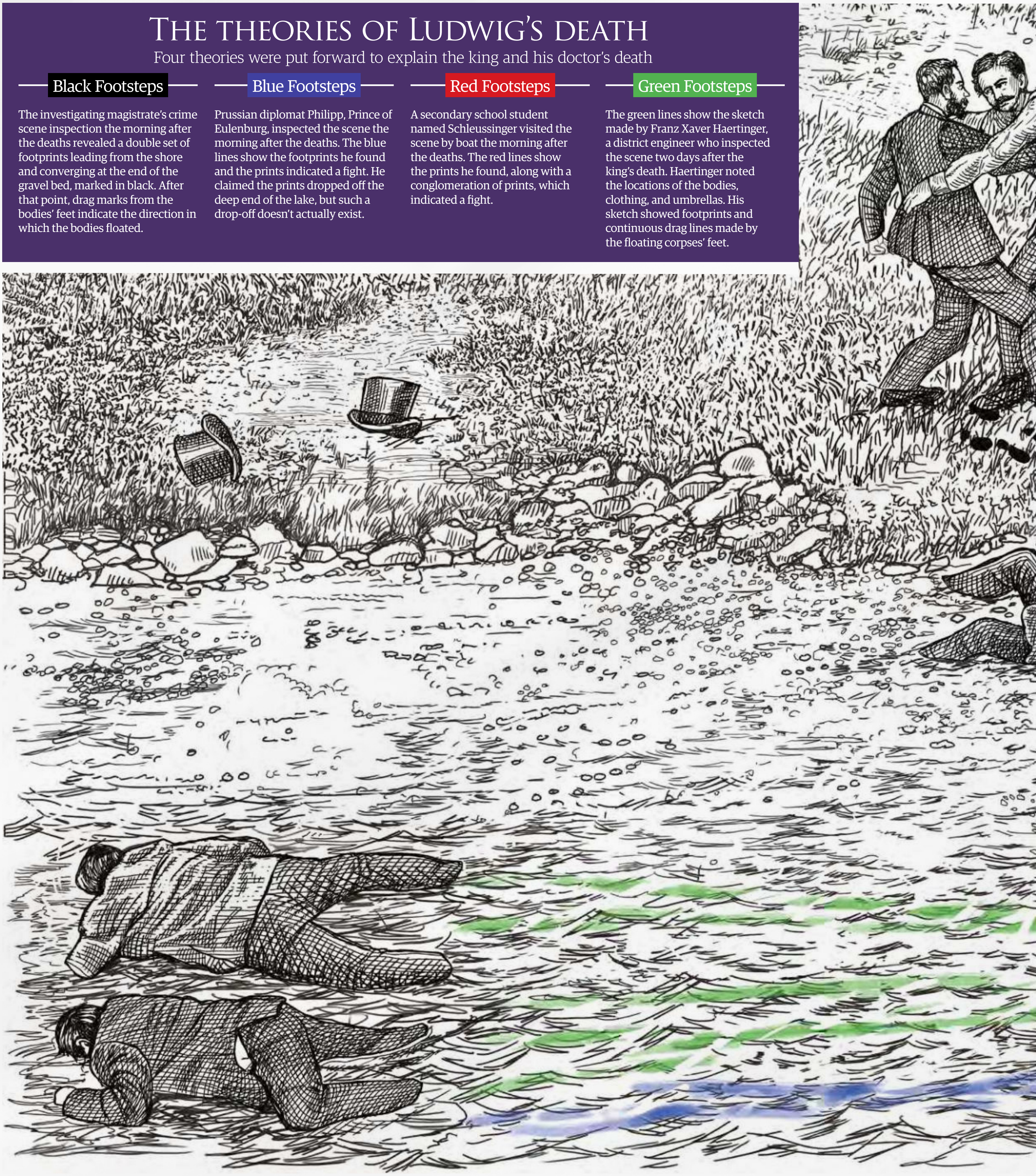
Prussian diplomat Philipp, Prince of Eulenburg, inspected the scene the morning after the deaths. The blue lines show the footprints he found and the prints indicated a fight. He claimed the prints dropped off the deep end of the lake, but such a drop-off doesn't actually exist.

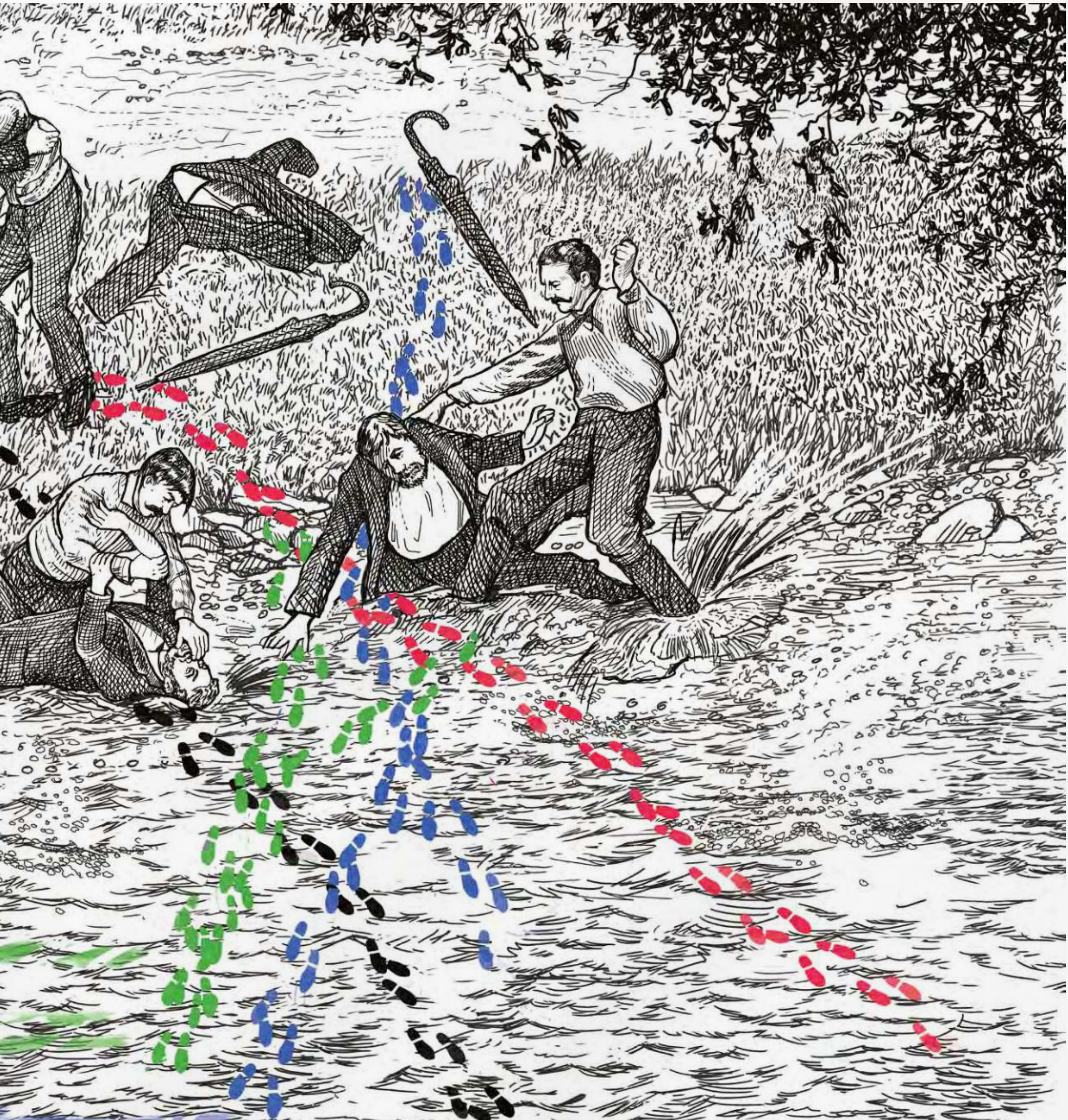
Red Footsteps

A secondary school student named Schleussinger visited the scene by boat the morning after the deaths. The red lines show the prints he found, along with a conglomeration of prints, which indicated a fight.

Green Footsteps

The green lines show the sketch made by Franz Xaver Haertinger, a district engineer who inspected the scene two days after the king's death. Haertinger noted the locations of the bodies, clothing, and umbrellas. His sketch showed footprints and continuous drag lines made by the floating corpses' feet.





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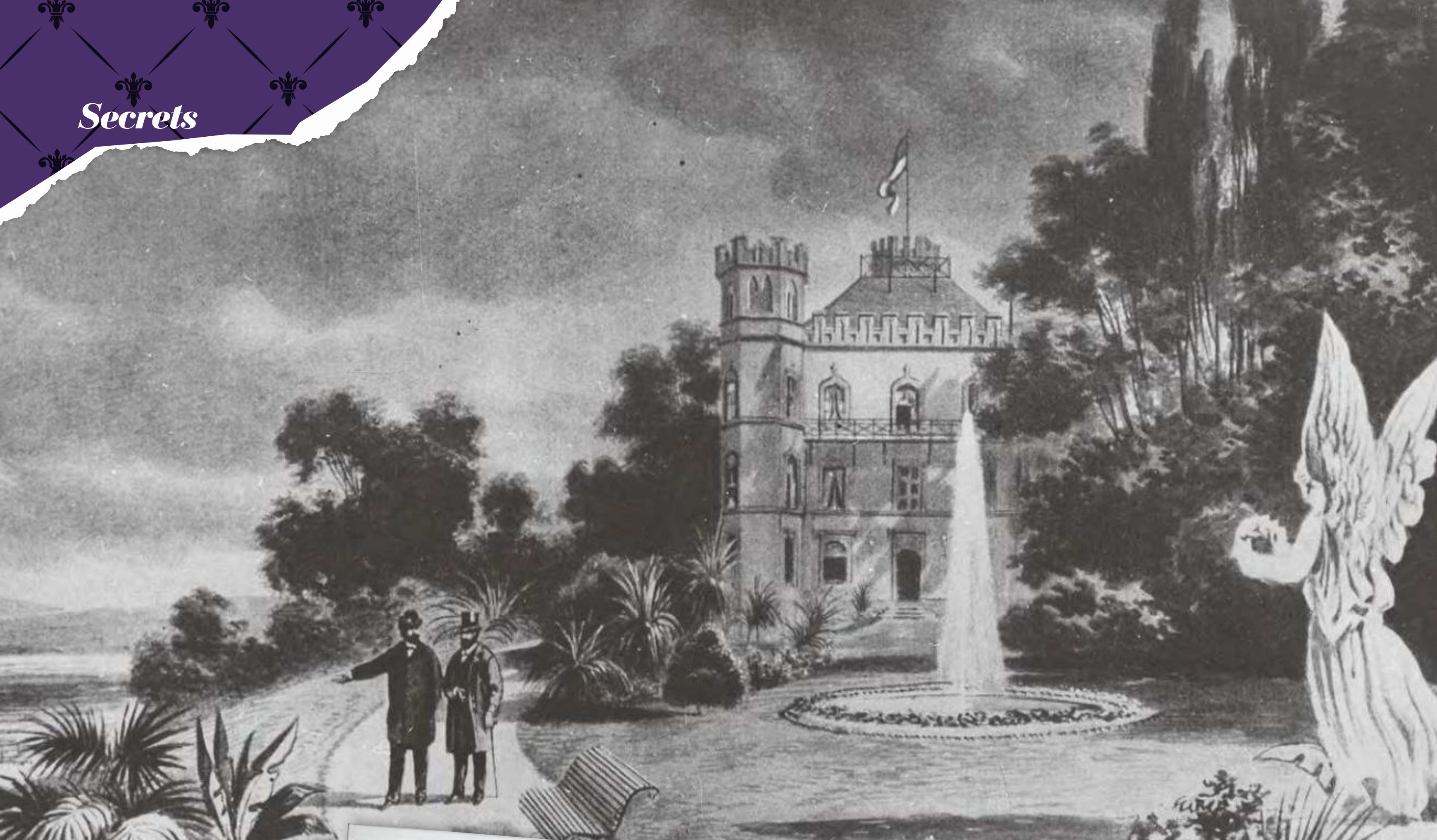
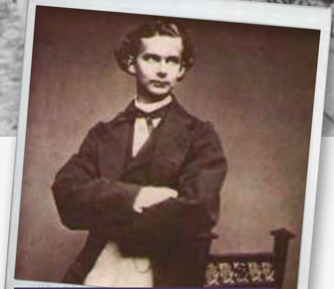


Ludwig upon the day of his death, imagined with Doctor von Gudden



Ludwig II as photographed while at Hohenschwangau Castle, Bavaria

The value of the crime scene sketches is questionable. Wind, wave action, and the footprints of onlookers and investigators might have compromised the scene. It's also curious that the witnesses claim to have found trails crossing the gravelly lakebed on the shoreline, when in reality the size of the gravel makes it hard to leave any mark. However, no other aspect of the investigation has spurred so many conspiracy theories as the oaths the witnesses had to take. The Bavarian government asked those involved in the events of the night of 13 June to swear never to reveal what they witnessed, not even to a priest.

So how do Germans explain the deaths? They pose four credible theories. The first - the official government version - is suicide-homicide. According to this theory, Ludwig, despondent over his deposition, took advantage of his and Doctor Gudden's isolation on the castle grounds. Ludwig broke away from Doctor Gudden and dashed into the water to drown himself. Gudden chased and caught Ludwig, trying to stop him. A struggle ensued in which the stronger and larger king overpowered the smaller and older doctor and killed him. Ludwig then waded out into deeper water and let himself drown. Both bodies drifted back to shore. But there are several problems with this theory.

First, Ludwig's pocket watch stopped 72 minutes before Doctor Gudden's did. That suggests that the king died before the doctor. The significance of those times and the factors that might have influenced the watches' machinery belong to the most controversial aspects of the case. In an experiment conducted by a watchmaker with a replica of a period watch, the watch's machinery didn't even hold out for a minute once it was placed in water. But might the watches' individual craftsmanship have played a role? Furthermore, Ludwig was wearing only a vest when he died and Doctor Gudden both a vest and overcoat. It would have taken longer for the water to saturate his clothing and reach his pocket watch.

Doctor Gudden's death mask shows a markedly swollen left eye and scratches on the nose. Assuming Doctor Gudden sustained those injuries in a fight with Ludwig, the lump over his eye suggests he survived for some time following the blow. After all, bruises occurring at the time of death cause little to no swelling, but bruises occurring before death do.

Another problem with the official theory is the autopsy results: the doctors found no water in Ludwig's lungs. That doesn't necessarily mean that Ludwig didn't drown; in a rare form of drowning called dry drowning, a laryngeal spasm suffocates the victim without any aspiration of water. The victim then floats - just like Ludwig and Doctor Gudden did - instead of sinking. According to an investigator with the Missouri Water Patrol, however, dry drowning accounts for only 10-15 per cent of all drowning cases. It's uncommon enough that he recommends that police rule other causes of death, such as accident or homicide, for a freshly dead floating body. The urgency of his admonition becomes deafening for two floating bodies.

Indeed, accident and homicide are the other theories. An accidental death could have taken several forms. It's possible one or both men died from a heart attack upon entering the cold water. If they fought each other, one or both could have fainted or suffered circulatory failure. Doctor Gudden might have carried chloroform as means to subdue his patient if necessary. Chloroform poisoning could have caused either man to collapse and dry-drown. One witness claimed Ludwig's body smelled like ether.

And what of the witness oaths? There's no need to cover up a suicide or accident. The most hotly debated theories involve just the kind of thing you'd expect to see covered up: murder and manslaughter. According to the murder theory, Ludwig fell victim to political intrigue and Doctor Gudden was silenced as a witness.

Two men involved in the recovery of the bodies later claimed, in a diary and deathbed confession respectively, that someone shot the king. One was the fisherman who helped find the bodies. He claimed that he'd tried to help the king escape - Ludwig had fled to his waiting boat and was shot in the back as he climbed in. The fisherman

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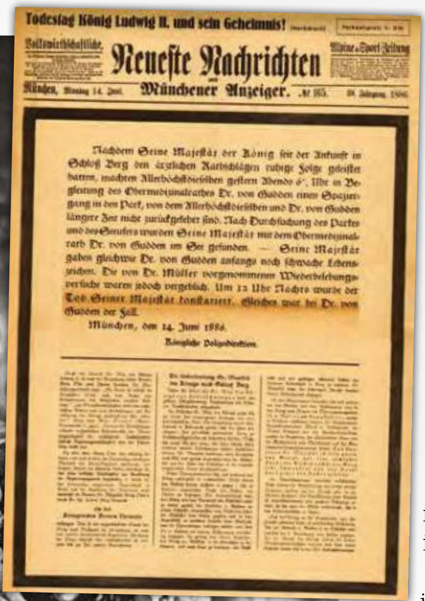


Todestag König Ludwig II. und sein Geheimnis!

Neueste Nachrichten
und
Münchener Anzeiger.

München, Montag 14. Juni.

Nachdem Seine Majeſtät der König ſeit der Ankunft in Schloß Berg den ärztlichen Ratſchlägen ruhige Folge geleiſtet hatten, machten Allerhöchſtdieſelben geſtern Abends 6¾ Uhr in Begleitung des Obermedizinalrathes Dr. von Gudden einen Spaziergang in den Park, von dem Allerhöchſtdieſelben und Dr. von Gudden längere Zeit nicht zurückgekehrt ſind. Nach Durchſuchung des Parkes und des Seeufers wurden Seine Majeſtät mit dem Obermedizinalrath Dr. von Gudden im See gefunden. — Seine Majeſtät gaben gleichwie Dr. von Gudden anfangs noch ſchwache Lebenszeichen. Die von Dr. Müller vorgenommenen Wiederbelebungsverſuche waren jedoch vergeblich. Um 12 Uhr Nachts wurde der Tod Seiner Majeſtät konſtatiert. Gleiches war bei Dr. von Gudden der Fall.

München, den 14. Juni 1886.

Königliche Polizeidirektion.

pushed the body back intro the water and paddled away to save his own life, only to help in the search later. The other man was one of the doctors who had examined the body on the night of 13 June. He'd told his daughter on his deathbed that he couldn't leave the Earth without exposing the lie he'd lived with for many years: Ludwig had been shot. The drowning story was a cover-up.

A relative of Ludwig claimed to possess the coat he wore that night - she even showed bullet holes in the back to several of her guests. Another witness sketched Ludwig's dead face at Castle Berg and depicted a dark fluid dribbling from the king's mouth. It was blood, posits a Bavarian art historian, who made a copy of the picture when he appraised it. He says that points to murder.

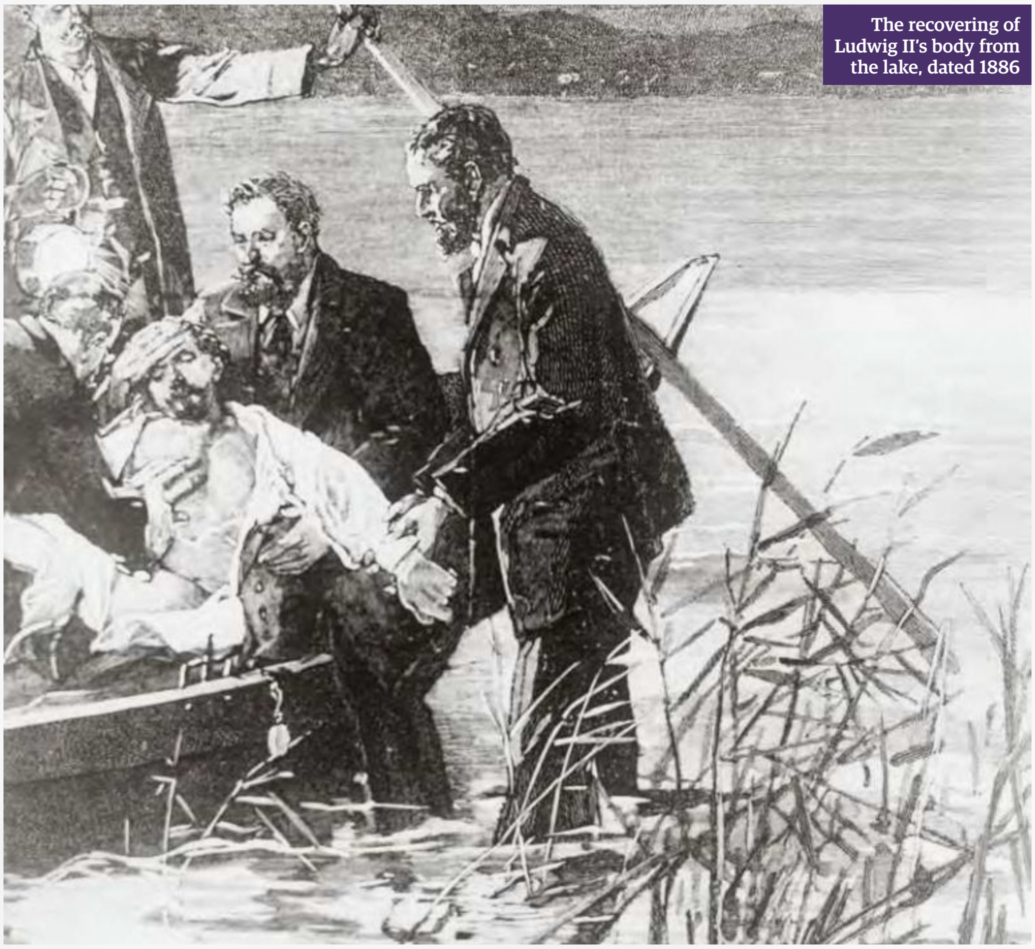
The problem with this evidence is that it's so ephemeral. The coat disappeared in a house fire and the diary disappeared at the fisherman's death (although he allegedly gave the critical page to a local historian before he died, and the historian published it). A medical examiner says that the dark fluid wasn't necessarily blood. Drowning victims - even dry drowning victims - develop foam around their mouths and noses consisting of air and mucus. This plume, as it dissipates, can take on a darker colour, which could have been the substance in the sketch. On the other hand, the physician who attempted artificial resuscitation on the king on the bank of Lake Starnberg probably removed any mucus airway obstruction first. Because the sketch was made after the resuscitation efforts, the exact nature of the fluid remains unclear.

A variant of the murder theory is manslaughter. Armed gendarmes were patrolling the castle grounds that evening to prevent the king's escape and keep others out. If Ludwig and Doctor Gudden fought each other in the water, one of the gendarmes might have not recognised them in the wind and rain and shot them as intruders. Embarrassed about its failure to properly handle the king's confinement, the Bavarian government might have ordered a cover-up.

According to this theory, the doctors performing the autopsy falsified the results: they didn't report the bullet wounds. But why not then falsify the autopsy report all the way around? They could have gone a step further and claimed to have found water in Ludwig's lungs, supporting the official suicide-drowning theory. The physicians' failure to find a cause of death suggests that at least they were honest.

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of King Ludwig's death is how elegantly the evidence skips and hops atop the divide separating the watershed theories of suicide, accident and homicide. Even now, historians still can't figure out what happened that night. Ludwig II once wrote that he hoped his life would present an eternal enigma to the world - the circumstances of his death more than fulfilled his wishes.

"The physicians' failure to find a cause of death suggests they at least they were honest"



The recovering of Ludwig II's body from the lake, dated 1886

© Getty Images, Mary Evans

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THE SECRET PRINCE

Prince John, son of George V and Queen Mary, disappeared from history after his early death, but in life he was a treasured member of the House of Windsor

Written by **June Woolerton**

The paperboy brought unexpected news on Monday 20 January 1919. Headlines that day announced the death of Prince John, youngest son of King George V and Queen Mary, at the age of 13. A smiling boy in a sailor's uniform looked out at readers in a string of photos marking his life, nestled alongside short and formal obituaries. But if people were unprepared for news of his death, more shocks were to come. The papers revealed that young John had died following an epileptic fit and confirmed he had suffered seizures for most of his short life. It was the first time that the royal family had acknowledged his condition.

The Daily Mirror wrote "sympathy will be felt by everyone for the King and Queen," but in the years that have followed, sympathy for George V and Mary has been in short supply when it comes to John. They have been accused of hiding him away to avoid embarrassment over his epilepsy. John has been described as a 'tragic secret', written out of history and held up as an example of an uncaring attitude in the House of Windsor.

Much of the criticism centres on the decision to send John to live at Wood Farm on the Sandringham Estate with his nanny, Lala Bill, in the last years of his life. The modern telling of John's tale is that his contact with his family lessened as his epileptic seizures became more severe and more frequent. We do know that his public appearances came to an end and that none of his family were with him when he died, on 18 January 1919, at Wood Farm. They found out he had passed away in a telephone call. Critics see this as evidence that George and Mary couldn't cope with either the personal or public fallout from admitting their child had epilepsy and possibly a form of autism too. But one line in Mary's diary soon after John's death reveals a far more human side to the tale that is often told about John. "Miss the dear child very much indeed," she wrote.

John had been a huge part of their lives and their decisions for him in his final years can equally be seen as attempts to give him the best treatment available for epilepsy, a condition for which there was no established medical treatment. Far from being ashamed of John, George and Mary loved him dearly and spent as much time as they could at his side.

It's easy to see why people adored John. He was charming, caring and a rule breaker. Some of the children who played with him at Wood Farm in his last years described him as fun loving, very friendly and concerned for others' feelings. One childhood friend, Elsie Hollingsworth, remembered his fondness for music and how he loved to sit with her, listening to records on her mother's gramophone. Elsie also recalled frequent visits to Wood Farm by George V and Queen Mary. Her father worked on the Sandringham Estate and often told his daughter in the evening that his jobs that day had included driving Prince John up to see his parents and his grandmother, the ageing Queen Alexandra. The modern idea of the abandoned prince longing for family contact sits uneasily with the memories of those who knew the young prince.

There is no doubt that John was born into an unusual family. His parents were an odd couple who became devoted to one another despite a strange start to their marriage. Mary had originally been engaged to George's older brother, Albert Victor, second in line to the throne. When he died, George took his place in the succession and at the altar. He married Mary in 1893 and as Duke and Duchess of York they soon built a big family. The future Edward VIII was born with much fanfare in 1894 with Albert (later George VI) following in 1895. Their only daughter, Mary, was born in 1897 while two more sons, Henry and George, arrived in 1900 and 1902. Mary provided her husband with so many boys that he once joked he would "soon have a regiment, not a family," and life for the children was very regimented. Both George and Mary were strict parents with high standards that had to be met. George drilled his children like soldiers to instill discipline and is reported to have said that as he was scared of his own father, he would make sure his own children were scared of him. Mary liked to read Shakespeare and poetry to her offspring, even at a very young age, and her main contact with them was when they were brought to her room for an hour every evening by their nannies. Their home at York Cottage in Sandringham was run along exacting lines.

John Charles Francis, born on 12 July 1905 at York Cottage, was the last of their children. By the time of his birth, his parents were Prince and Princess of Wales and John's birth was heralded with the usual formal announcements. Sixth in line to the throne, behind his father and four brothers, John was christened on 3 August 1905 with a very royal line-up of godparents including King Carlos I of Portugal and Prince Carl of Denmark who was about to become king of Norway. His paternal grandparents, Edward VII and Alexandra, delighted in the arrival of another baby to spoil (Queen Alexandra called the Wales children the 'Georgiepets') and the beaming young prince with piercing blue eyes soon joined his siblings on picture postcards of the royals, as much a part of family PR as his sister and four brothers.

John was outwardly a healthy, happy baby with a brush of blonde hair and a full face, but he had been born after a difficult labour and had suffered breathing problems after arrival. He soon rallied and his parents expected him to follow in his siblings' footsteps and adhere to the regimented lifestyle of the royal children at York Cottage. But John seemed to have no intention of sticking to the rules, even from an early age.

While there was no sign yet of his epilepsy, his exuberant and defiant behaviour was raising eyebrows. In later years, it has sometimes been taken as evidence that John had some kind of autism and was unable to fully understand the emotions being conveyed so responded to them in a very different way. In one famous incident, George kissed Mary on his return from a hunting trip and John was heard to say, "She kissed Papa, ugly old man," while as he grew up, the youngest of the Wales children became known for practical jokes like putting glue on door handles. His father's

> "While his siblings grew nervous when their father drilled them, John smiled"

York Cottage on the Sandringham Estate was John's home in his early years

"Nanny, I love you"

Charlotte 'Lala' Bill's royal career ended up devoted to Prince John, but it had begun almost a decade before his birth. She came to work for his parents, then Duke and Duchess of York, as a nurse to their growing family and soon made her mark. Horrified by the cruel way a senior nanny treated the royal children, she broke ranks and complained. The woman was dismissed while Charlotte ended up head nurse. The trust placed in her by the royals was clear. In one of the last photos taken of Queen Victoria with her family, Charlotte hid behind the monarch to prop her arms up so she didn't drop her newest great-grandchild.

Her royal charges nicknamed her Lala and she was strict and loving in equal measure. They spent so much time with her that Lord Esher noted the eldest, the future Edward VIII, was starting to pick up her slight cockney accent. It was Lala who perhaps first realised that while the older children were moving towards independence, John would need more attention, not less, as he grew up and his seizures became worse.

It was inevitable that Lala would go to live with Prince John at Wood Farm when his parents set up his household there. The two spent every day with each other and while it was Queen Mary who selected local children for John to meet, it was Lala who supervised their games and played alongside them. When John died following a massive seizure, Lala was with him. Queen Mary described the nanny as 'heartbroken' at the death.

Lala Bill never married and had no children of her own, but the bond between her and her royal charges never faltered. She kept a huge photo of John as a toddler on her mantelpiece. When she died in 1964 at the age of 89, a note was found in her belongings. It was written in a large, childish scrawl and read "Nanny, I love you. Johnny".

Lala Bill and Prince John became inseparable

Mary of Teck with her children at Abergeldie Castle, Aberdeenshire

fierce response had no impact on John, who just carried on. While his siblings grew nervous when their father drilled them, John smiled through the whole procedure. The US president, Theodore Roosevelt, described a lunch where John and the other royal children joined the adults at the end of the meal. George called out to his youngest son who responded curtly and carried on with what he was doing. Roosevelt recalled George almost proudly predicting that John would defy him. But even if John's actions were causing concern, the young prince was very far from being hidden away.

John's behaviour could just as easily be put down to his early childhood experiences of his parents. By the time he was born, George and Mary were expected to take on even more royal responsibilities and when John was just three months old they left for a tour of India, which would keep them away from home for over half a year. Immediately upon their return, they went to Madrid for the ill-fated marriage of George's cousin Victoria Eugenie to King Alfonso XIII of Spain, and soon after that they headed to Oslo to see John's godfather crowned King Haakon VII of Norway.

By the time John turned one, they had spent just four months in the same country as him. Their rota of royal duties was just as heavy in John's early years. If he defied them more than the others did, it may have been due to a lack of contact necessitated by royal life as much as any condition like possible autism. But before George took the throne in 1910, John's health would cause serious cause for concern.

At the age of four, the young prince suffered his first epileptic fit. At the time, medical understanding of the condition was limited. We know now that epilepsy is linked to neuron activity within the brain, but when John had his first seizure the word 'neuron' was barely known, coming into existence in the 1890s. Although epilepsy had been documented since around 4000 BCE, treatments for it were rudimentary. Bromide had been used to stop seizures for several decades but the first modern treatment, phenobarbital, wouldn't be developed until 1912. Often, people with epilepsy were put in asylums and they experienced much stigma and ridicule. But far from hiding their son away, instead George and Mary ensured that their son was part of their now very public life.

On 6 May 1910, Edward VII died and George V took the throne. A new era for the ruling dynasty had begun with PR-savvy George in charge and just like his brothers and sister, John had an active role to play in the creation of a new royal family. John was taken to watch his grandfather's funeral outside Marlborough House in London. In reality, no one would have batted an eyelid had the youngest of their princes missed the procession, but his parents insisted he take part. At around the time his epilepsy became evident, George and Mary took him to one of the most public events of recent times played out in front of thousands who had come to pay their respects to Edward VII. John was as much a part of the funeral as any of his siblings, but that's perhaps because his parents

THE KING WHO CALLED PRINCE JOHN "AN ANIMAL"

John enjoyed a close relationship with the brothers closest to him in age, but his bond with his eldest sibling, Edward, was more difficult. Two letters exist that show the future Edward VIII had trouble expressing any warmth for John. One caused outrage when it was discovered years after both of the royals were dead.

That controversial letter was sent to Edward's mistress, Freda Dudley Ward, just two days after John's death. Edward describes the loss of his brother as "the greatest relief imaginable or what we've all silently prayed for". But during the six-page letter, he adds, "No one would be more cut up if any of the other three brothers were to die than I should be, but this poor boy had become more of an animal than anything else and was only a brother in the flesh and nothing else."

They are harsh words even for someone who might be able to plead the shock of grief. But the brothers' relationship was inevitably limited - Edward was 11 years older than John and they spent little time with one another. In 1907, when John was two, Edward left the family home to go to naval college at Osborne, then Dartmouth. After that, the two brothers would never live in the same house again.

He admitted the lack of closeness to John in another letter to his mother, in which he said, "No one can realise more than you how little poor Johnnie meant to me who hardly knew him". This missive followed an earlier, lost letter in which he had appeared to use more insensitive language to Queen Mary about Prince John. Although its contents aren't known, Edward himself admitted that "I feel such a cold hearted and unsympathetic swine for writing all that I did."

Edward has often been portrayed as a troubled and selfish man. His cold attitude towards his younger brother has done little to dispel that.

The prince of Wales in 1919, the year that Prince John died

Prince John, in a black-trimmed coat and hat with a feather in it, is photographed on a shopping trip in his early years

> "George and Mary ensured that their son was part of their public life"

had a deeper understanding of his condition than many others.

George V, in particular, had experience of epilepsy already. His uncle, Queen Victoria's youngest son Leopold, had had seizures as well as suffering from haemophilia. George had seen that uncle enjoy a full and active life before his death at the age of 31. Leopold's widow had helped raise funds for the Hospital for Epilepsy and Paralysis in London after his death. George ended up as resident of the National Society for the Employment of Epileptics, which was established in 1892 to help people with the condition find jobs. The society was setting up farms around the country, known as colonies, where people with epilepsy could live and work together - an idea that was seen as radical and forward thinking. Seeing their son experience seizures was a shock to George and Mary, but perhaps one they were better prepared for it than others.

If John's life became more isolated in the early years of his father's reign, that was all but inevitable. His parents had even more royal duties to perform now, heading to India again in 1911 for their coronation as emperor and empress there. His eldest brothers were a decade his senior and had gone to naval college before his first seizures took place. The two siblings closest to him in age, Henry and George, loved to spend time with him, while he had another playmate in his cousin, Crown Prince Olav of Norway, who sometimes came to visit. But eventually Henry and George were sent away to school too, at St Peter's Court in Kent, and soon after that came the first public indication that John's life would be different.

A report in The Times refuted previous claims the youngest prince would attend St Peter's Court. No reason was given but by now, John's fits were becoming more regular. It is also suspected that he was struggling to keep up academically. One of the children he later played with at Wood Farm, Winifred Thomas, swapped photos with him, which he signed and that show that even as he approached adolescence, John's handwriting remained large and childlike. His tutor was dismissed when John turned 11 and his education was now in the hands of Lala Bill. She would be his main companion and carer when the decision was made, at the height of World War I, to move John to Wood Farm.

George and Mary's decision to send John to Wood Farm is often seen as the crucial piece of evidence for their coldness towards their son and their determination to hide him away. But at a time when fresh air, peace and relaxation were advocated by leading experts in epilepsy as ideal treatments for those with the condition, these royal parents were able to use their influence and wealth to give their children just what the doctors had ordered. At Wood Farm, John had a happy and carefree existence with Lala Bill tending to all his needs and every day filled with playing and fun. George and Mary provided John with a happy and comfortable life in his new house. Not only was he surrounded by his favourite toys and possessions, but his mother broke the social rules of the time to find him friends. She met local children and the families of estate workers to select suitable playmates for John.

Queen Alexandra had a special flower garden planted at Sandringham and John regularly visited her to tend their patch together. George and Mary visited him often and he spent Christmas Day 1918 with them before returning to Wood Farm. His condition was clearly a matter of concern, but when Lala Bill phoned them on the afternoon of 18 January 1919 to say he had died after a severe fit, the shock was complete.

Mary recorded in her diary that "our poor little Johnnie had passed away suddenly," and later wrote to a friend that "his malady was becoming worse as he grew older… he has thus been spared much suffering". John's funeral took place soon afterwards at St Mary Magdalene Church with his special place in the family shown at his burial. His parents had named him in honour of George's youngest brother, Alexander John, who had lived for just a day in 1871. Now, they laid him to rest beside the uncle he had never known. Queen Alexandra wrote to Queen Mary that their "two darling Johnnies lie side by side".

Years later, vociferous criticism of George and Mary claimed their shame over John's epilepsy led them to pretend he no longer existed. He wasn't mentioned in the official programme for their Silver Jubilee in 1935 and a later Windsor family tree missed his details out altogether. But the same tree also missed out Alexander John. In fact, the evidence shows that John was an integral part of George and Mary's family and given a lifestyle believed, at the time, to offer good support for people with epilepsy. As parents they may well have been worried about the impact of stigmatisation on their son should his condition become public knowledge, but it's also clear that John's fits, in a time with no real medication to help control them, were debilitating and left him in need of extensive care. His family clearly loved and valued him and wanted to keep him safe and well. Their love for John was also shared by many others. In fact, so many people wanted to come to his funeral that they ended up having to stand outside the church and John's grave was covered in a carpet of flowers. Far from being hidden, John had been such a large part of royal life at Sandringham that no one could stay away from paying their last respects to a prince they thought of as their own.

The young prince was seen less frequently at royal events as his epilepsy became more debilitating

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The Prince of Wales had many affairs before marrying Wallis Simpson, but his romance with marguerite alibert turned sour when she kept hold of his scandalous letters and blackmailed him with them

MURDEROUS MISTRESS

While Edward was known for his many affairs, he didn't expect one of his lovers to become a murderer

Written by **Jessica Leggett**

In the early hours of 10 July 1923, three gunshots echoed through London's Savoy Hotel. Prince Ali Kamel Fahmy Bey was on the floor, blood trickling from his head. His beautiful wife, Maggie, stood behind him, a gun in her hand. About three kilometres away, her former lover, Edward, Prince of Wales, was at a dinner party in Mayfair. Little did he know that he was about to enter a race against time to save himself and the monarchy from one of the most sensational scandals of the 20th century.

Although remembered for his abdication in 1936 in order to marry the woman he loved, Edward's head had been turned by a number of women before Wallis Simpson. Nevertheless, it was one woman in particular who opened him up to the world of lustful promiscuity - his first mistress, Marguerite Marie Alibert, known to her suitors as the elusive 'Maggie Meller'.

When Edward met Maggie, he was a young, sexually inexperienced Prince of Wales while she was a high-class French courtesan. He was 22 years old and Maggie, at 27, was five years his senior. A relentless gold digger and social climber, Maggie had worked her way up from the gutters of Paris to its luxury brothels, where she entertained the most influential men in France.

Her desire to seek wealth and comfort wasn't surprising considering she lived on the streets after giving birth to her only child, Raymonde, at the tender age of 16. Unable to care for her daughter, Maggie placed her into care and didn't see her again for a number of years.

Turning to prostitution was the only way Maggie could survive and she evolved into a sexy, charismatic woman who knew how to play with the temptations of men and entice them into her world. Maggie's connection to aristocratic, wealthy men gave her the opportunity to move in some of the most influential circles in society - and opened the door to meet Edward.

She was introduced to the prince through a friend at a restaurant in Paris in April 1917. Edward was already fond of French women, having developed a taste for them after a liaison with a prostitute the year before. Maggie, alluring, charming and catastrophically beautiful, blew the prince away, and he was instantly besotted with her. Over the next few months, Edward spent as much time with Maggie as possible and lavished her with gifts, while her offerings of erotic literature unveiled a sexual side to the prince that he never knew existed.

Edward wrote passionate love letters to Maggie - a habit he would maintain with all of his mistresses - and their contents were nothing short of scandalous, full of salacious comments and declarations. To his French lover, he complained about his strict upbringing and criticised his father, King George V. Foolishly, he also included harsh judgements regarding Britain's conduct in World War I. If exposed, these letters could cause an outcry that would engulf the monarchy, but the naïve prince clearly trusted his lover.

Edward's gallivanting around Paris with a prostitute didn't go unnoticed and started to cause concern among his friends and family. By the end of 1917, Edward had been dispatched to Italy, an act that not only upset him but failed to sever his feelings for Maggie. The affair continued for 18 months, with Edward desperate to return to see her in Paris whenever he could.

Then the prince's notoriously fickle nature changed everything. At the beginning of 1918, he met Freda Dudley Ward, wife of a British Member of Parliament, during an air raid in London. The prince was an insecure and fanciful man whose infatuations could change from hot to cold within a day. He immediately became obsessed with Freda upon meeting her and soon showered her with endless devotion.

Of course, this also meant that Edward's interest in Maggie suddenly disappeared and he soon abandoned his relationship with her. Edward, either too innocent or too ignorant, expected Maggie to accept his decision quietly and to depart from his life. He clearly didn't know the woman he was dealing with.

Above all else, Maggie was cunning. She had not engaged in the affair for love or pleasure - Edward was the perfect target to exploit for money and prestige and she was not about to let him go. All of those suggestive and slanderous letters were still in her hands. Maggie had a ticking time bomb and she knew it, gleefully reminding Edward of the same in November 1918.

In a letter to his adviser, Edward discussed Maggie's blackmail, calling her letter a "regular stinker". He had wrongly assumed that his ex-lover would have destroyed their correspondence, complaining that he "didn't think she would turn nasty". He lamented that "The whole trouble is my letters and she's not burnt one!" It seemed that Edward was facing a precarious situation until a stroke of luck saw Maggie's attention quickly diverted elsewhere.

In 1919, Maggie met Charles Laurent, a rich young air force officer. Knowing that she could achieve the wealth and security she craved far easier with him than with Edward, she soon abandoned her blackmail. Maggie and Laurent were quickly married and she began to live the indulgent lifestyle she had always wished for.

In fact, Maggie was so wealthy that she sent for her daughter and placed her in a boarding school in England to receive a good education. Raymonde also took Laurent's surname and it was clear that mother and daughter had finally reached a position that was considered respectable in society. For now, it seemed the prince had managed to escape from the scheming clutches of his former mistress.

"He clearly didn't know the woman he was dealing with"

Edward continued to see Freda and renewed his habit of sending obsessive and passionate letters, despite it not ending well for him the last time. As for Maggie, she quickly grew tired of her new husband and divorced him a mere six months into their marriage. This time, Maggie left with a hefty divorce payment that allowed her to continue living the decadent lifestyle to which she had become accustomed. She continued to fund her daughter's education, established her own household and was a regular in Paris society. Through her wiles and charms she had finally achieved the life of which she had always dreamed. But it wasn't enough; she wanted more.

As luck would have it, she soon found herself in the company of a 23-year-old Egyptian 'prince', Ali Kamel Fahmy Bey. Although remembered as a prince, he wasn't born a royal. Ali's family was extremely wealthy thanks to the cotton trade and his father had also funded a hospital in Cairo. As a show of gratitude, Egypt's king had bestowed the honorary title of prince upon him.

Prince Ali was a regular on the Parisian scene and soon became enamoured with Maggie, who was ten years his senior. It was almost parallel to the romance that Maggie had with Edward - Ali requested a formal introduction through a mutual friend and his obsession grew. The prince was determined to marry her and, although she desired his wealth, Maggie hesitated.

When Ali returned to Egypt, he quickly sent for his love, claiming that he was gravely ill. Upon her arrival, the prince once again insisted that they marry. Maggie's concern was that her lifestyle would change dramatically if she moved east and that she would have to relinquish her love for couture clothing. To please her, the prince drew up a contract that stated Maggie could continue to dress in Western clothes as long as she converted to Islam and that she could file for divorce any time she wished. Maggie accepted and the couple were married in Cairo, Egypt, in December 1922.

The newlywed bliss soon soured for the couple. Both Maggie and Ali had quick and volatile tempers that flared frequently, often when they were in public, but that was where the similarities ended. While Ali desired an obedient, submissive wife, Maggie wanted to continue living the wealthy, independent lifestyle that she had carved out for herself. The liberated promiscuity that had once attracted the prince now made him angry and jealous and Maggie began to feel like a captive in her marriage.

It was soon clear to Maggie that she would not be able to leave her husband and walk away with his money as easily as she had done with Laurent. Her wish to leave was made even more difficult when she realised that after their marriage, Ali had revoked the clause in the marriage contract that allowed her to divorce him. Maggie started to sleep with a gun under her pillow.

The couple arrived at London's Savoy Hotel on 1 July 1923, intending to stay for a month. As usual, they quarrelled daily, both in private and public. During the first week, Maggie, who was in ill health, requested the house doctor at the Savoy to examine her. London at the time was experiencing a bout of hot, humid and sticky weather that was aggravating her condition.

She was suffering from painful haemorrhoids and told the doctor that they were the result of her husband's brutish and unnatural sexual tastes, that Prince Ali "had torn her". Maggie even went as far as to ask the doctor to provide her with a certificate that supported her claims, although in the end he didn't give it to her. It was clear that Maggie

Marguerite 'Maggie' Alibert was a glamorous, high-class French courtesan who charmed the young Prince of Wales

was already sowing the seeds for divorce and was trying to collect supporting evidence.

By 9 July, tensions between Maggie and Ali had reached boiling point. The couple had spent the evening at the theatre watching the ironically titled The Merry Widow before returning to the Savoy for dinner, where they caused disruption by fighting and screaming at each other in the middle of the restaurant. Maggie became so incensed that she grabbed a bottle of wine and threatened to smash it over the prince's head, who in turn bit back that he would do exactly the same to her.

Calm was restored after the restaurant staff intervened and Maggie returned to their room. Ali chose not to join her, instead hailing a taxi and travelling to Piccadilly, despite the thunderstorm brewing outside. According to his private secretary, Mr Said Enani, who had accompanied the couple to London, the prince had most likely gone to visit a nightclub or to solicit a prostitute.

At 2am on 10 July, the prince returned to the hotel and fought with his wife for the last time. Half an hour later, the night porter, John Beattie, heard the couple arguing and saw the prince stumble out of their room, scratch marks all down his face.

"Look! Look what the bitch has done!" Ali exclaimed to the shocked porter. Quietly asking him to calm down, the porter carried on down the corridor while the prince whistled for Maggie's dog, which had run out of their hotel room. Beattie had just turned the corner when he heard them behind him – three gunshots.

He rushed back. There, lying on the floor, was Ali with blood seeping from his bullet wounds. Maggie stood behind her husband, the gun in her hand. She dropped it when she saw the porter. "What have I done?" she cried. Ali was rushed to hospital where he died from his injuries.

Prince Ali, Maggie's murdered husband

At that very moment, Edward was socialising in Mayfair, completely unaware that, less than three kilometres away, his former mistress had blood on her hands. He had carried on as normal since the days of his affair with Maggie and remained enthralled with Freda, an affair that would continue for another 11 years until he met Wallis Simpson. For Edward, Maggie was a faded memory, an unfortunate folly from his youth. He was completely oblivious to the fact that the nightmare he had thought ended four years ago was about to come back with a vengeance.

For Maggie, it seemed there was no way out. She had publicly shot her husband and had been caught red-handed holding the weapon. Once her reputation as a gold digger and her career as a courtesan were exposed to the court, a guilty verdict was sure to follow.

But cunning Maggie had a smoking gun up her sleeve – she still had Edward's letters, damning evidence that could forever blacken not only his reputation but also that of the monarchy. Desperate times called for desperate measures – Maggie's blackmail would not be the empty threat it had been before.

When the royal household discovered the identity of the Savoy murderess they were mortified. Maggie's upcoming trial was already creating a sensation in the press all around the world, and it would delve into her background and expose her past illicit relationships, including her affair with Prince Edward. They couldn't risk her exposing him to the court and the public, or allow her to produce the letters that would corroborate her story and cause a scandal.

A covert operation was required to cover up the evidence and protect the monarchy, but there was only one way to ensure that Maggie wouldn't speak: she had to have her innocence declared, freedom secured and, above all, her neck saved from the hangman's noose.

Negotiations to get the letters from Maggie began. Major Ernest Bald, a friend of Edward's and one of Maggie's former lovers, was constantly sent to Holloway Prison between July and August 1923 to mediate between Maggie and the royal household. Maggie eventually agreed to surrender her letters to Clark Carr, a diplomat in Cairo, where she had stored them for safekeeping.

On 21 August, Carr travelled from Cairo to London and Edward interrupted his holiday at Balmoral, Scotland, to return to London for just one day to collect the letters and confirm that they were all there. Of course, they weren't. Maggie, thinking ahead, had kept hold of some of them as insurance, just in case the bargain she had struck for her life was renounced.

Exactly two months after the shooting, Maggie was charged with Prince Ali's murder on 10 September and her trial began at the Old Bailey in London. A letter from the foreign secretary, Lord Curzon, to his wife reveals the fears that existed

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THE OTHER LOVES OF EDWARD'S LIFE

Aside from Maggie, Edward had many romantic relationships throughout his youth, leading to his reputation as the 'playboy prince'

LADY ROSEMARY LEVESON-GOWER

Edward met Lady Rosemary Leveson-Gower during WWI as she worked as a Red Cross nurse in France. He saw her caring treatment of soldiers and fell in love, but his father refused to let them marry. Rosemary married two years later and was killed in the Meopham air disaster in 1930. Edward never forgave his father and his subsequent affairs were all with married or divorced women.

FREDA DUDLEY WARD

Edward fell head-over-heels in love with Freda Dudley Ward, a married woman, in 1918 and ended his affair with Maggie as a result. Freda remained Edward's mistress for another 16 years and was one of his closest confidantes. Their relationship finally ended when he was introduced to Wallis Simpson in 1934.

VISCOUNTESS THELMA FURNESS

Edward's affair with Thelma Furness, Viscountess Furness, an American divorcée, began in 1930 and she was regularly seen at his side. It was Thelma who introduced him to her friend, the now infamous Wallis Simpson, who would go on to supplant Thelma in the prince's affections in 1934.

over her case: "The French girl who shot her so-called Egyptian prince in London and is going to be tried for murder, is the fancy woman who was the Prince's 'keep' in Paris during the war, and they were terribly afraid that he might be dragged in. His name is to be kept out." And so it was. Edward's schedule was suddenly changed and, instead of continuing on a tour around Britain, he was to visit Canada in September, when Maggie's trial would be in full swing.

On paper, the case against Maggie was ironclad. There was a key witness, the porter, who confirmed he had caught Maggie standing by her husband's body, holding the gun. A weapons expert testified that the firearm Maggie used, a .32 Browning semi-automatic pistol, could not have fired three shots automatically and would have required a deliberate, manual movement from her to fire more than once. Her public, violent fights with her husband were well known. There was absolutely no doubt - she had killed Prince Ali.

It was clear that the defence would have their work cut out for them. Enter Sir Edward Marshall Hall, one of the most infamous and formidable barristers of the time, who was hired to defend Maggie. To deflect attention away from his client, he began a complete character assassination of her slain husband.

Hall described Ali as a violent, sadist brute who would attack his innocent European wife and that poor Maggie had killed him while acting in self-defence. He even implied that the prince and Enani had engaged in a homosexual affair, which was considered one of the most abhorrent and evil of acts at the time. According to Hall, Maggie's only and "greatest mistake" was to marry a man who saw her as nothing more than an object to do with as he pleased.

As a remarkable public speaker, Hall's theatrical performances added to the sham of the murder trial. In a re-creation of the moments leading to the prince's death, designed to terrify the jury, he crouched down in front of them as the vengeful Ali, snarling and threatening. He quickly changed positions and turned into the scared Maggie, reaching for the actual murder weapon and pretending to fire towards the jury, who now assumed the role of the dangerous prince.

Maggie was known for her beauty and she knew how to lure men in

Maggie's performance as the tearful, abused wife did wonders to blind the jury as she claimed that her husband would get his servants to spy on her, even when she was "in a state of undress". According to her story, life as a Muslim wife had turned Maggie into a prisoner in her own home and the fact that she could not speak English made her seem even more pitiful. Hall and Maggie's version of events completely contradicted those of the witnesses, but it didn't matter. Prince Ali had already been turned into a villain who had got his just desserts.

The prosecution wanted to attack Maggie's character in the same way that Hall had maligned Ali's. The jury needed to know that Maggie was a master of deception who lured in wealthy men with her skills as a high-class courtesan. The judge, Justice Rigby Swift, decided otherwise. He ruled that Maggie's past relationships, her career as a prostitute and her reputation as a gold digger couldn't be brought in front of the jury.

This undoubtedly changed the outcome of Maggie's trial – the jury were presented with only one side of the story, depicting Maggie as an abused wife who killed her dangerous husband to save her own life. Clearly, the royal household had come through on their end of the duplicitous bargain. The trial was a complete joke designed to seek Maggie's acquittal through any means necessary.

It took less than an hour for the jury to declare Maggie not guilty. She was free to go, even though it was clear that she had killed her husband. The verdict was celebrated in Britain, where the public had closely followed the trial of the woman subjected to the cruel beatings of her savage husband. On the other hand, the Egyptians were outraged. Not only had this woman escaped scot-free with the murder of one of their wealthiest men, but the nature and reputation of Egyptian men and their way of life had been severely tarnished as a result of Hall's passionate and imaginative defence of his client. The cover-up was obvious to those in the know, but there was little that could be done.

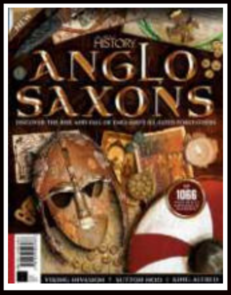
Edward's name was kept out of the trial and the resulting fall out, and he continued with his lavish lifestyle. As for Maggie, she disappeared into a life of obscurity as a courtesan in Paris. She outrageously attempted to sue Prince Ali's family over his late estate and at one point pretended to be pregnant with his son, who would have inherited his vast fortune. The Egyptians rejected her attempts in the belief that she had murdered her husband in cold blood.

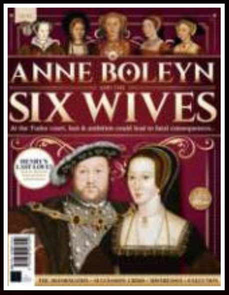
Regardless, Maggie used the title of 'princess' for the rest of her life and lived in a luxury apartment opposite the Ritz Hotel in Paris. Upon her death in 1971, it was discovered that she had been living off the funds provided by four or five of her lovers, one of whom destroyed the rest of Edward's letters on her behalf. Edward passed away a year later, the extent of his involvement in one of the biggest cover-ups of the 20th century never fully revealed during his lifetime.

The media frenzy outside the Old Bailey during Maggie's murder trial

STORY OF THE BATTLE of BRITAIN

Examine world wars and epic battles through maps and rare documents


ANGLO SAXONS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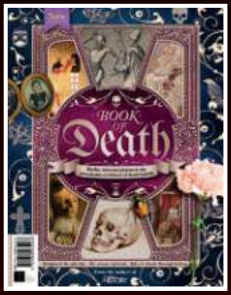
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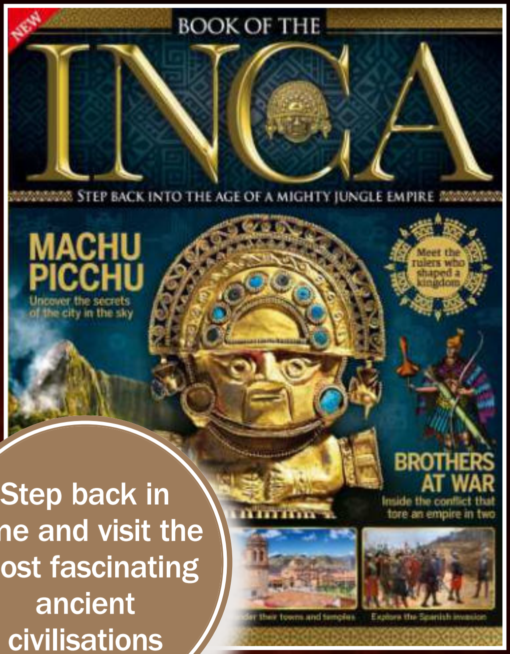
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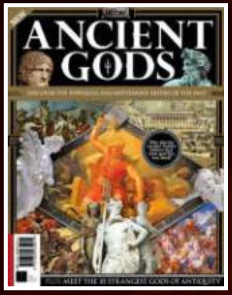
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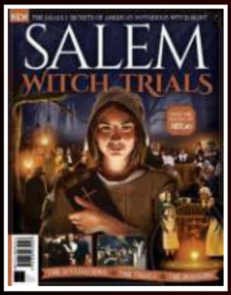
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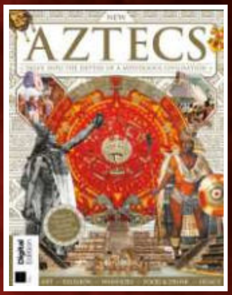

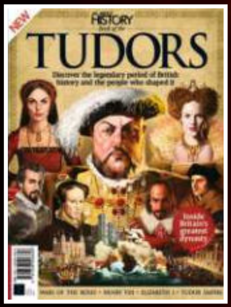

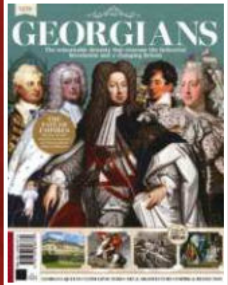

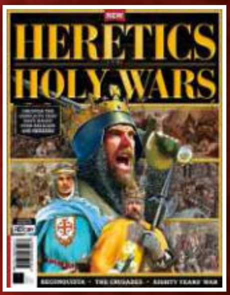
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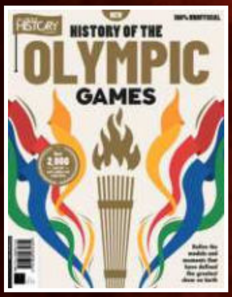
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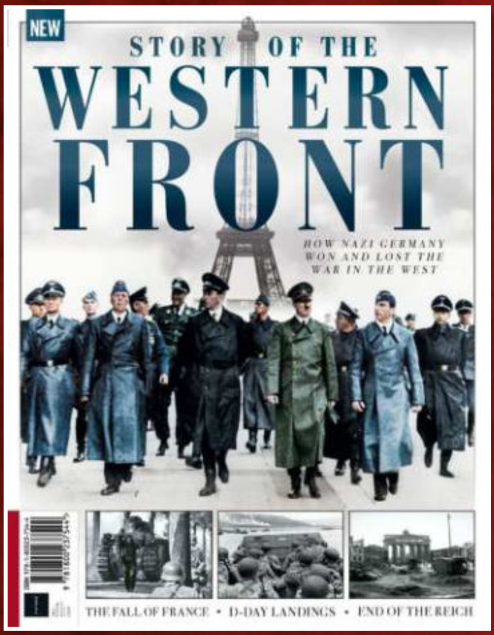
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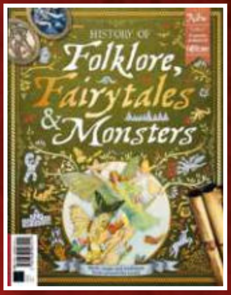
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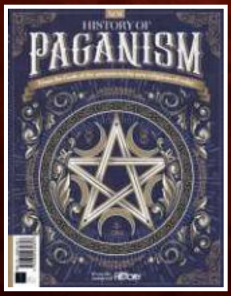
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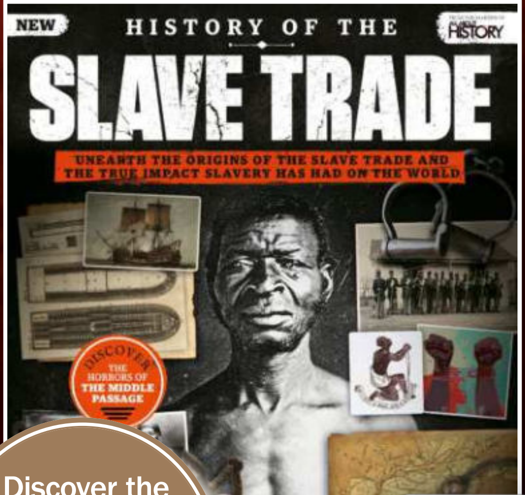
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